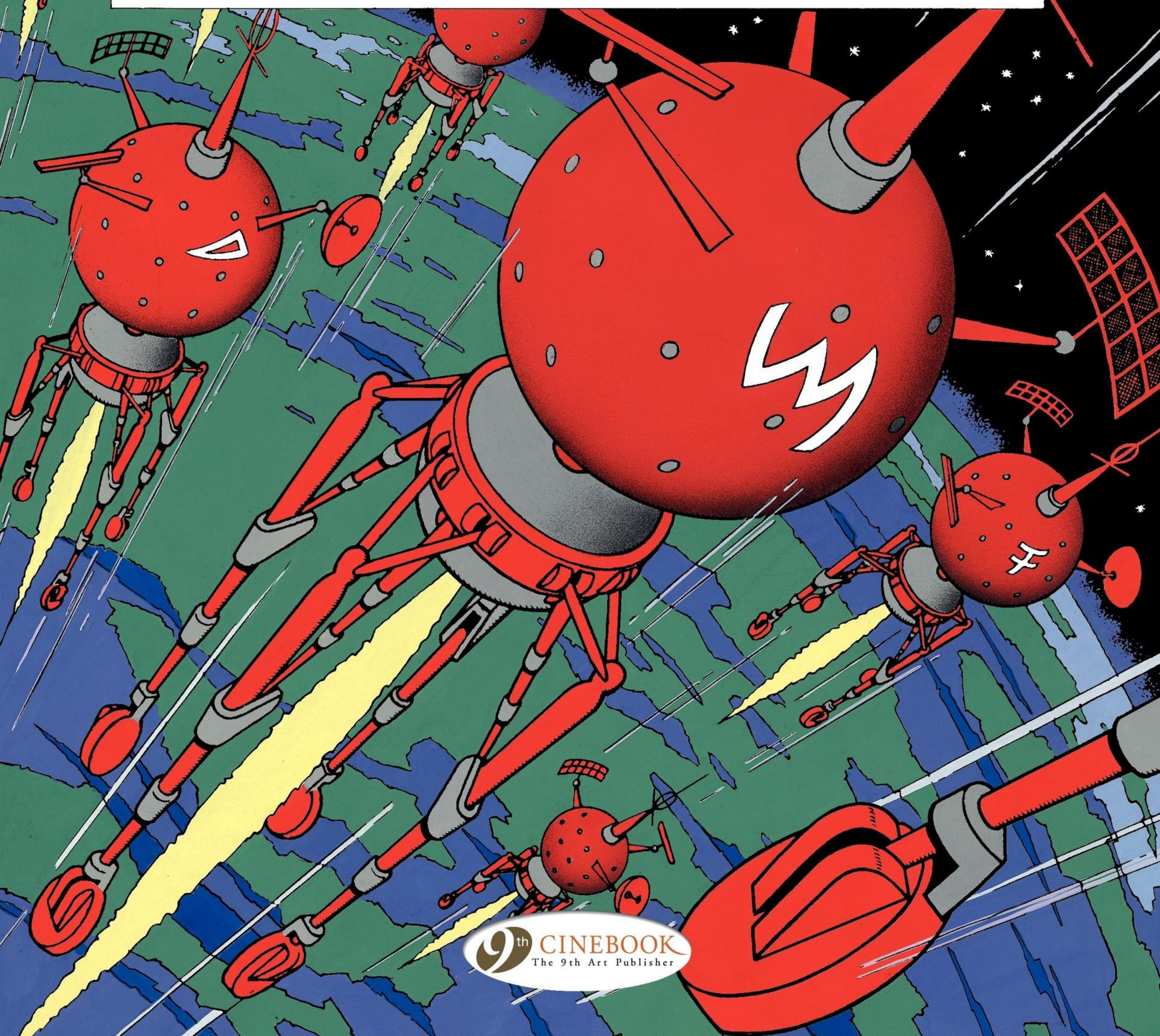




THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

Edgar P. Jacobs

ATLANTIS MYSTERY

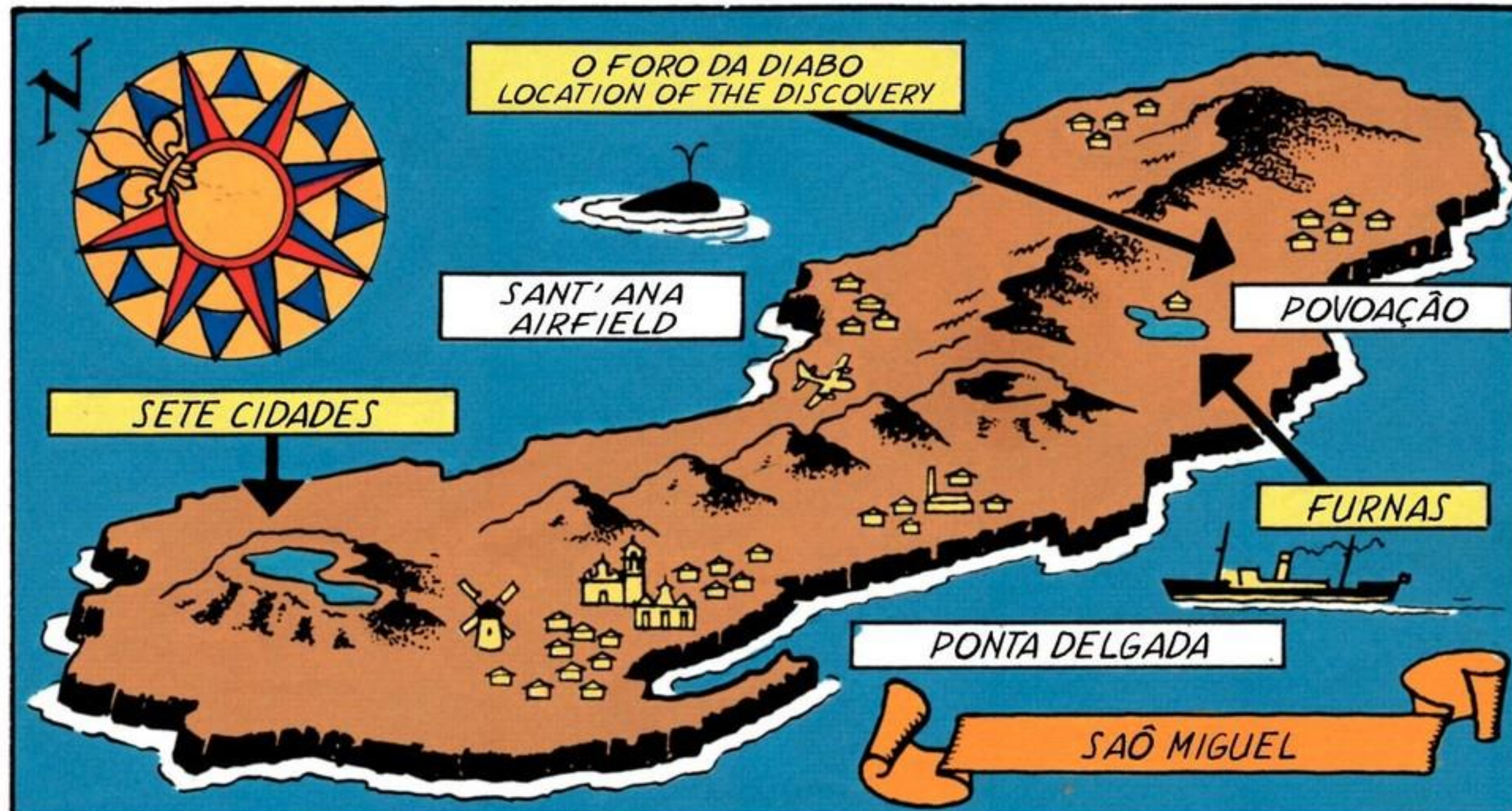


E.P. JACOBS

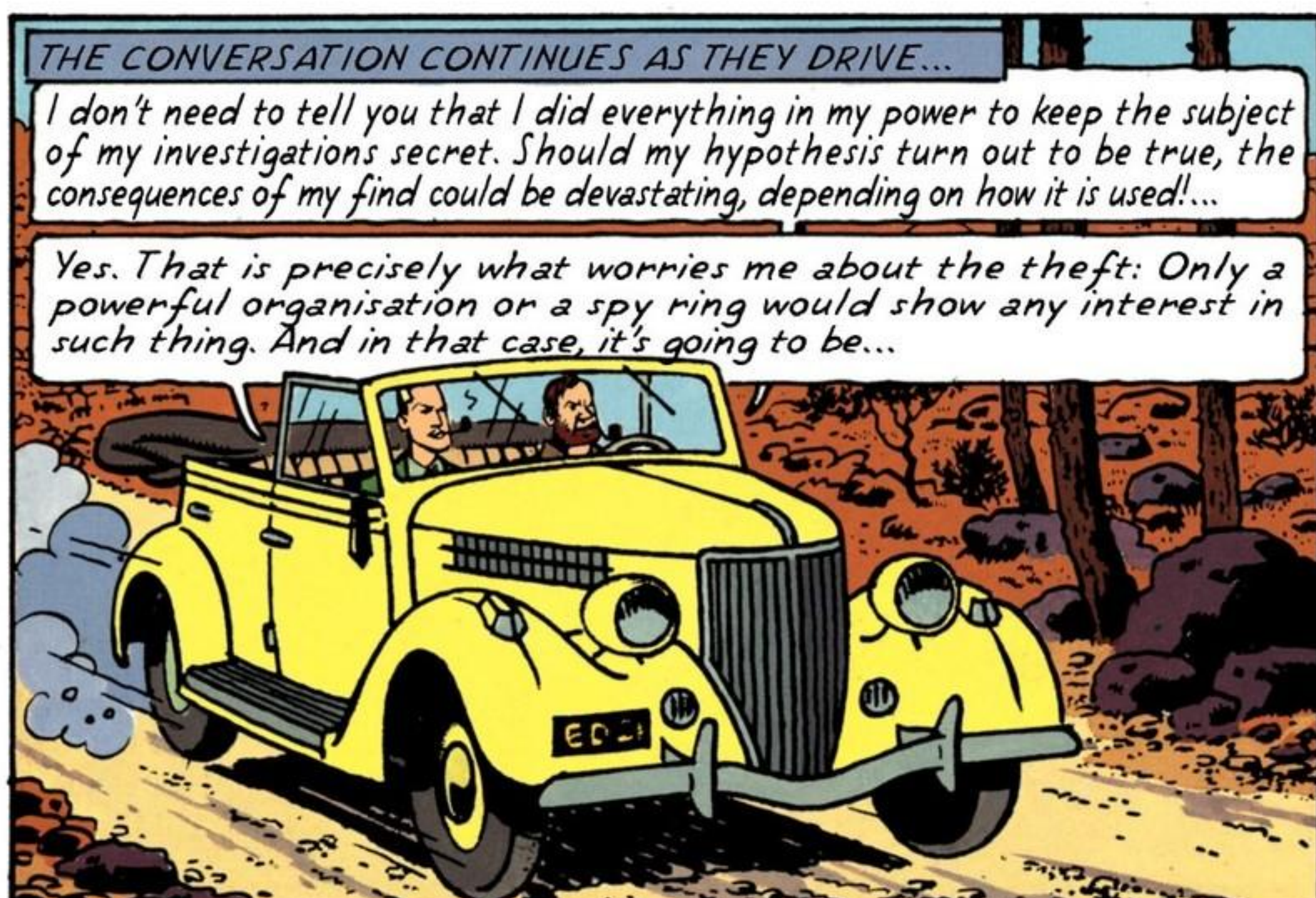
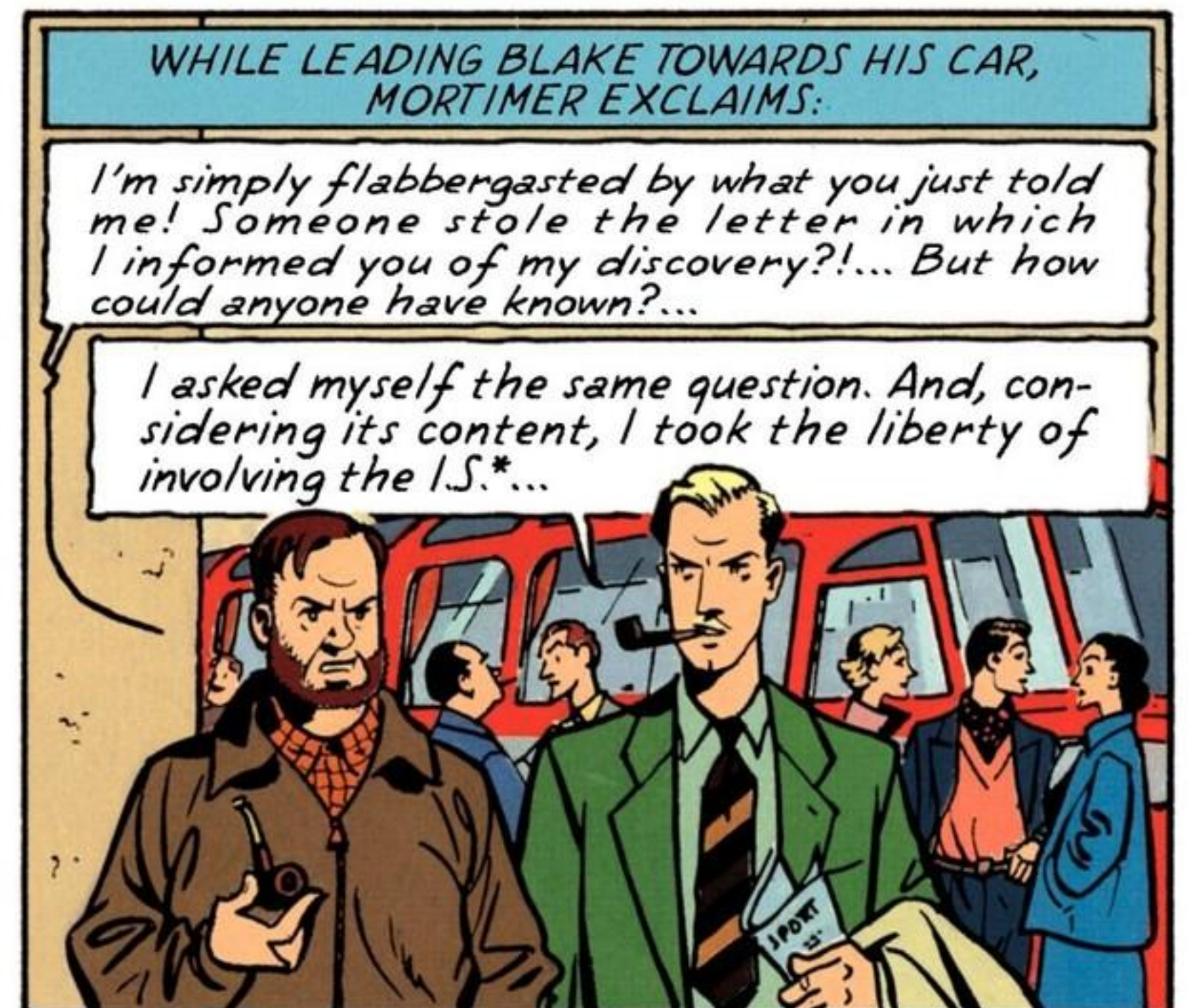
ATLANTIS MYSTERY



PROFESSOR PHILIP MORTIMER HAS COME TO THE ENCHANTING ISLAND OF SAO MIGUEL TO SPEND A FEW WEEKS' HOLIDAY. ITS STRANGE AND MAGNIFICENT SITES, COMBINED WITH A PAST SHROUDED IN MYSTERY, MAKE THE "GREEN ISLAND" THE MOST RENOWNED PART OF THE AZORES. AN EXTREMELY ANCIENT TRADITION HOLDS THAT IT IS ONE OF THE EMERGED SUMMITS OF ATLANTIS, THAT MYSTERIOUS LOST CONTINENT DESCRIBED BY THE PHILOSOPHER PLATO, WHICH, IN A MYSTICAL PAST, IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE VANISHED INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN...



IT WAS ENOUGH FOR THE PROFESSOR, EVER EAGER FOR NEW AND UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES, TO BEGIN EXPLORING THE WILD VALES AND CANYONS NEAR THE VOLCANIC VALLEY OF FURNAS. IT LED HIM TO A SURPRISING DISCOVERY—SO SURPRISING, IN FACT, THAT HE IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED HIS OLD FRIEND, CAPTAIN FRANCIS BLAKE. AS THIS EXTRAORDINARY STORY BEGINS, MORTIMER IS AT THE SANT' ANA AIRFIELD TO WELCOME THE CAPTAIN. BUT NO SOONER HAVE OUR TWO FRIENDS LEFT THE TERMINAL, ALREADY DEEP IN A LIVELY DISCUSSION, THAN THE PLOT BEGINS TO THICKEN!...



*INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (BRITISH INTELLIGENCE)

LIFTING THE BONNET, MORTIMER CONDUCTS A QUICK INSPECTION...

The ignition?...

More than likely. Let's see...

... AND SUDDENLY...

By George! Sugar! Sugar in the petrol! Look at this sparking plug...

Sugar?! So, it was sabotage?...

... QUICKLY, THE TWO MEN CONFER...

I was expected—that much is obvious! And I'd lay a thousand-to-one odds that someone wanted to keep us away from your place.

That must be it! No sense in hanging around here then. Let's walk back to the main road, and then... trust in Providence.

MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, IN THE ALREADY DARK GROUNDS OF "QUINTA DO PICO" MORTIMER'S RESIDENCE, A DRAMATIC EVENT HAS JUST TAKEN PLACE...

There! I shouldn't be disturbed for a good while.

APPARENTLY SATISFIED, THE MASKED STRANGER QUICKLY MAKES HIS WAY ACROSS THE LAWN AND UP A FEW STEPS, PUSHES OPEN A FRENCH WINDOW AND ENTERS THE SILENT VILLA...

Perfect! And now, to work...

TAKING OUT A SMALL, OBLONG BOX FROM UNDER HIS CLOAK, HE SNIGGERS.

With this, it'll be child's play.

THEN, ADVANCING SLOWLY, STEP BY STEP, THE MAN BEGINS SWEEPING HIS PECULIAR DEVICE ALL AROUND HIM...

AFTER HAVING METHODICALLY GONE OVER THE GROUND FLOOR, THE VILLAIN GOES UP A STAIRCASE...

Let's see up there now...

THERE, GOING FROM ROOM TO ROOM, HE INSPECTS THAT STOREY AND IS BEGINNING TO LOSE PATIENCE. WHEN, SUDDENLY, AS HE PUSHES ONE LAST DOOR, THE DEVICE EMITS A STRANGE LITTLE SOUND...

At last!

BOP BOP BOP

HAVING PERFORMED A FEW PRUDENT SWEEPS, THE STRANGER FINALLY LOCATES THE PLACE HE HAS SO ARDENTLY SOUGHT...

Careful now! It's here, in this corner... But...

BOP BOP BOP

What? In this aquarium?... Good old Professor! As cunning as ever!

BOP BOP BOP

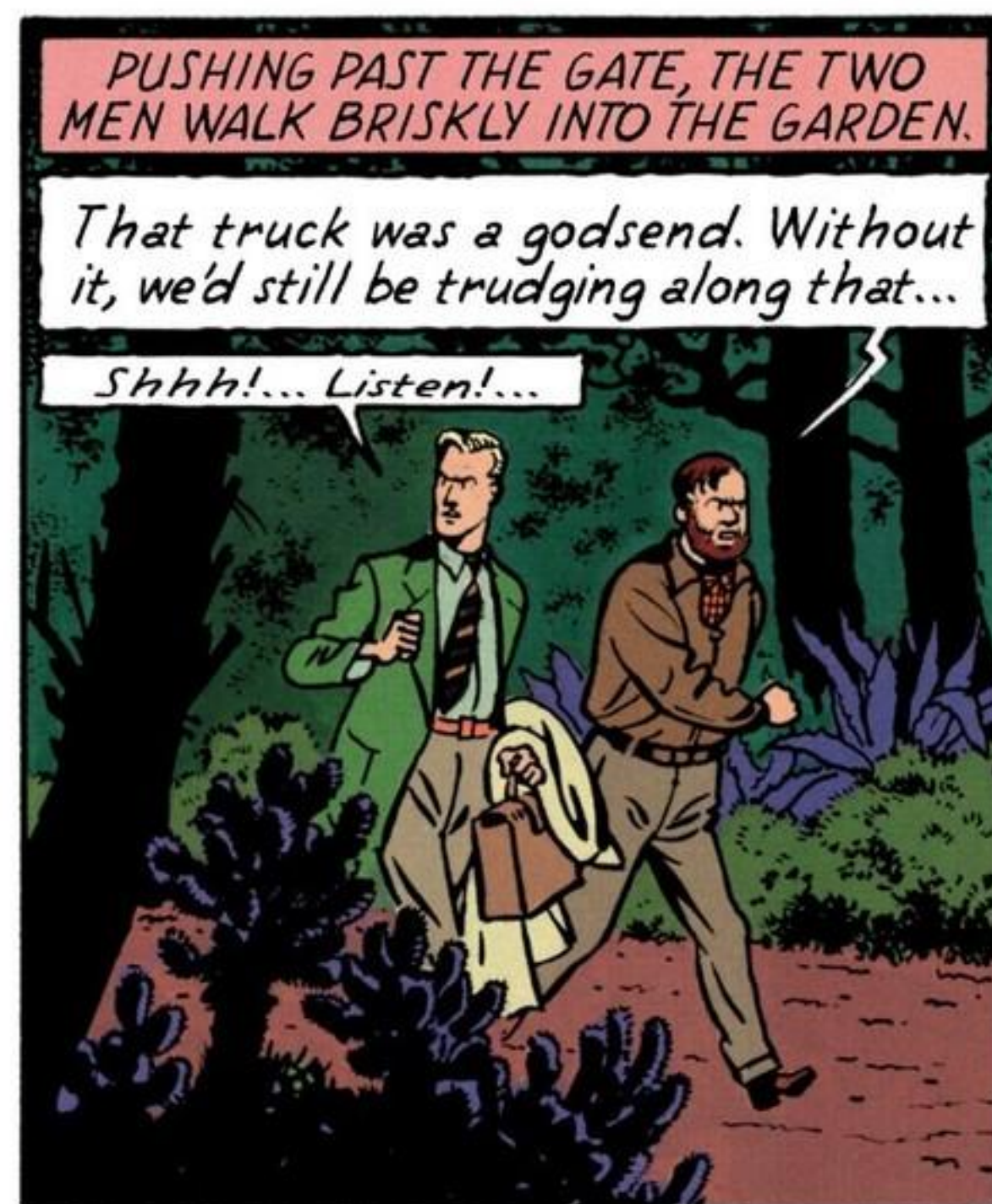
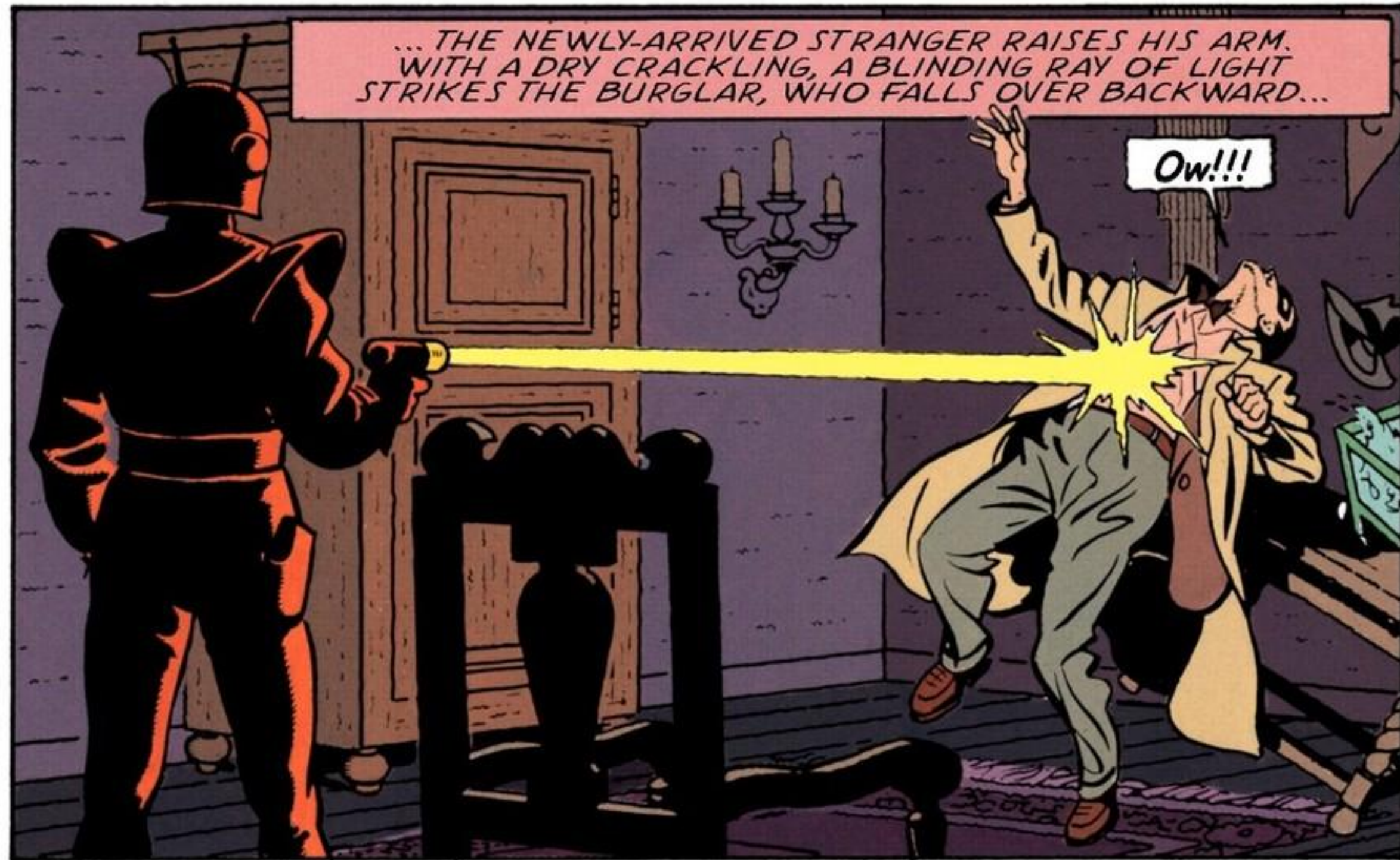
WITHOUT HESITATION, HE PLUNGES HIS HAND INTO THE WATER AND FEVERISHLY CLAWS THROUGH THE SAND AND ROCKS THAT COVER THE BOTTOM.

ALL AT ONCE, HE EXCLAIMS TRIUMPHANTLY...

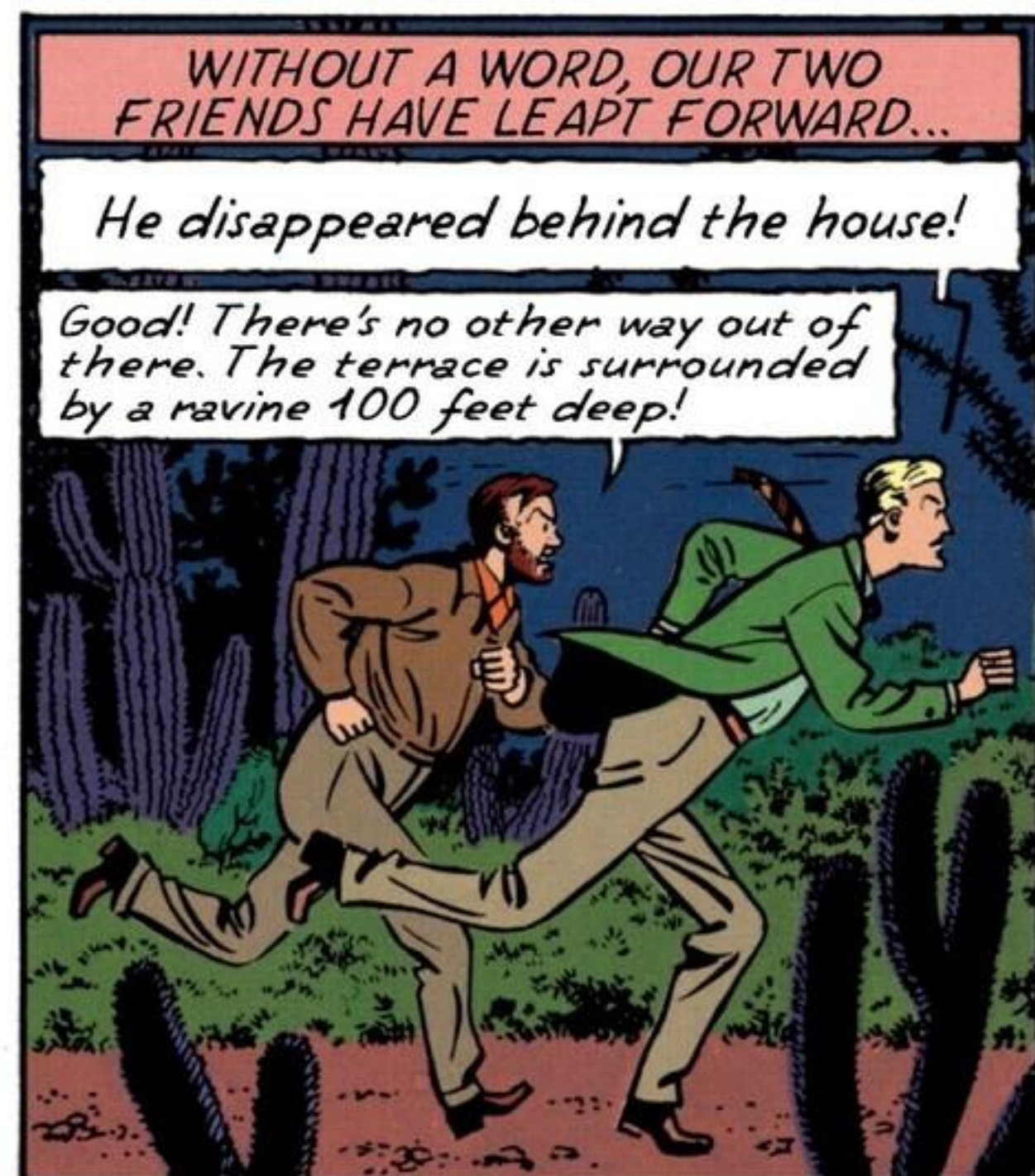
I've got it!!

BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, SOFT LAUGHTER MAKES HIM LOSE HIS GRIP.

Ha! Ha! Ha!



*IT WAS A PLEASURE, SIR.



THE NEXT DAY...

PECULIAR BURGLARY AT THE QUINTA DO PICO

"Yes, someone knocked out my servant and broke into my home," declares the current tenant of the villa, Pr. Mortimer, to the detective in charge of the investigation...

Yesterday towards 8:30 p.m., as he was making his usual round before closing the gate, Zarco Nêves, servant at the Quinta do Pico, rented some time ago by Professor Mortimer, was knocked out in the garden by an unseen attacker. Shortly afterwards, after being delayed by an automobile breakdown on his way back from the Sant' Ana airfield, where he'd gone to pick up a friend, the

MORE FLYING SAUCERS?...

Last night, around 9 p.m., an inhabitant maintains

professor found the unfortunate servant lying behind a bush...

WHAT WAS THE BURGLAR LOOKING FOR?

However, while the terse statement the professor gave the police seems to have satisfied the officer in charge of the case, Inspector Henriques, it does not appear to have convinced everyone. Certain reporters speak of rumours going around Furnas, concerning certain trips the professor took around the wild canyons and forests near Povoação. Trips that

IN A ROOM AT THE CENTRAL HOTEL IN PONTE DELGADO, TWO MEN ARE HAVING A SOMEWHAT SOUR EXCHANGE...

Fine, let's just forget about it!...

Believe me, Colonel. You'd be better off dropping your fantastic account of last night's events!... You can see that the newspapers don't...

THE MAN ADDRESSED AS COLONEL WHIRLS AROUND, HIS FACE TWISTED WITH RAGE, AND WE CAN NOW RECOGNISE HIM... OLRIK, THE ELUSIVE ADVENTURER AND ETERNAL OPPONENT OF BLAKE AND MORTIMER!

By thunder!... I told you before... That devilish weapon was no ordinary piece... Lightning shot out of it, and bam!... It was like a sledgehammer blow to my guts!!! By the time I came to, the other guy had vanished with the loot... I heard shouts in the garden and barely had time to run. My legs were shaky and my skull was still ringing like a bell!...

Listen, my dear fellow, if my government turned to you to get your hands on that... thing, it wasn't to hear you justify your failures with wild stories!... An unknown weapon? Ha, ha! Don't make me laugh! Was it used by some Martian fresh off last night's flying saucer, maybe?!

All right, Ostrog, cut the sarcasm!... I'll get my revenge!...

AT THAT MOMENT, AT THE QUINTA DO PICO, MORALE ISN'T ANY BETTER!

I could have done without this publicity! And to think we were just discussing the need for discretion!

Ah! Let's just be thankful that no one had the idea of linking our story to that of the flying object!...

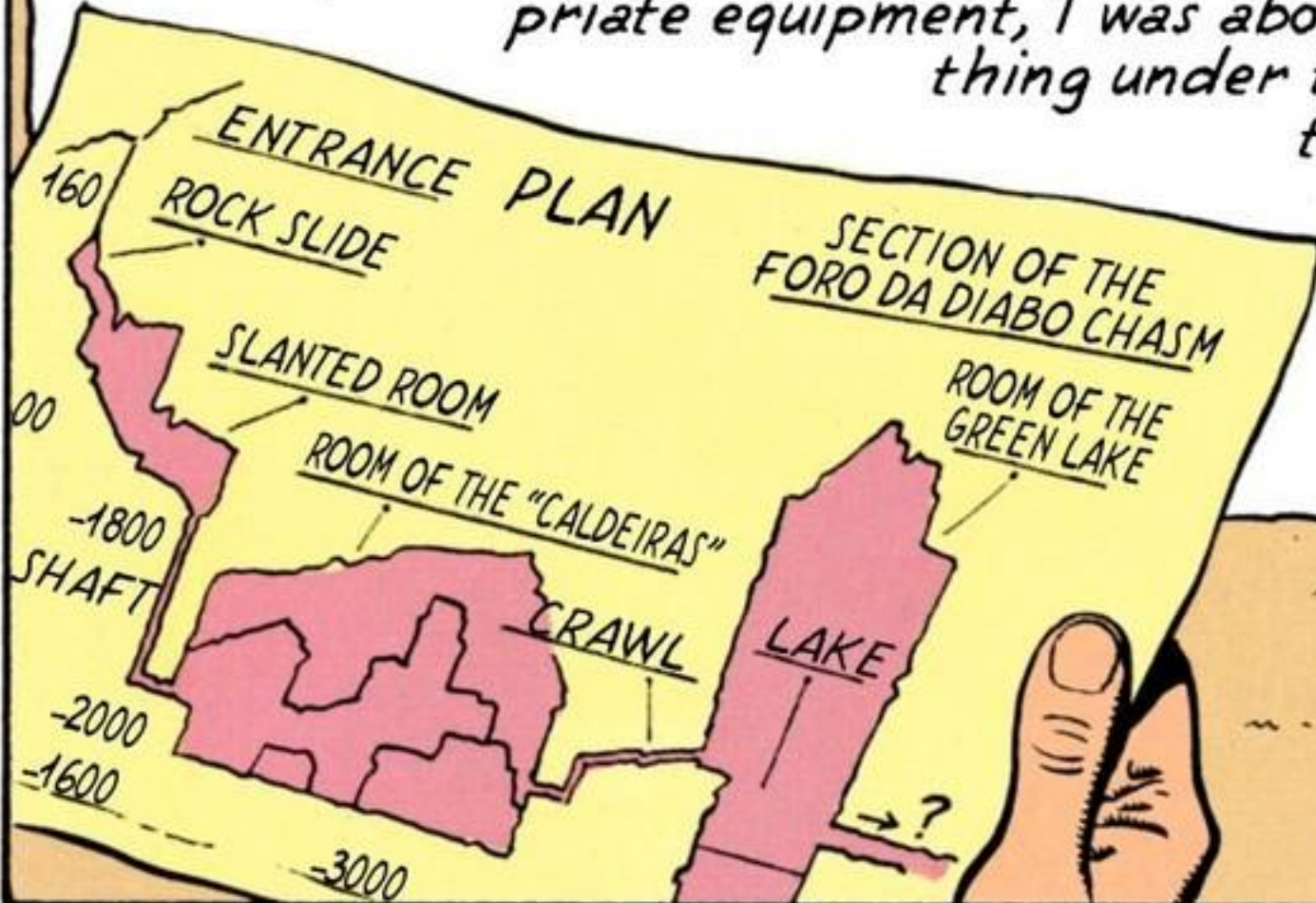
Wouldn't that be dandy!... But don't you think, maybe, we were victims of some hallucination?

Alas! I'm afraid not!... I found a great circle of burnt grass on the terrace this morning!...

Heavens, Blake! Don't tell me you also think that...

Yes, I know. It seems preposterous! So, better to drop the subject for the moment... Instead, let's go back to the story of how you made your discovery so we can know where we stand... We've had little chance to do so since last night...

Well! As the journalists are implying (and even though I deliberately left some of these details out of my letter), the place is, indeed, located near Povoação. It's a deep chasm that the locals call "O foro da diabo." Intrigued by the extravagant stories about it, I decided to explore it. With the help of my guide Pépé, I descended into the chasm, and I must confess that I wasn't disappointed: The sights were worthy of the legend! Galleries, huge rooms, torrents... it was all there! Anyway, the map you're holding will tell you more than any description... I was eventually stopped by that lake. As I lacked the appropriate equipment, I was about to turn back when I suddenly caught a glimpse of something under the surface... something that looked like a peculiar concretion. With a good deal of effort, I managed to pull it out of the wall in which it was embedded, and to my immense surprise, I discovered that it wasn't a gypsum crystal as I'd originally thought but a material entirely foreign to the surrounding formations...



*THE DEVIL'S ABYSS

After coming back here, I examined my find and discovered that it was no mineral I could identify—and that it had some peculiar properties. Not only was it clearly luminescent in the dark, but, what's much more important, it was also indubitably radioactive!... As I pondered this conundrum, I must confess I couldn't help but think of orichalcum, the Atlanteans' mysterious metal that was as precious as gold!...

Here we are!!...

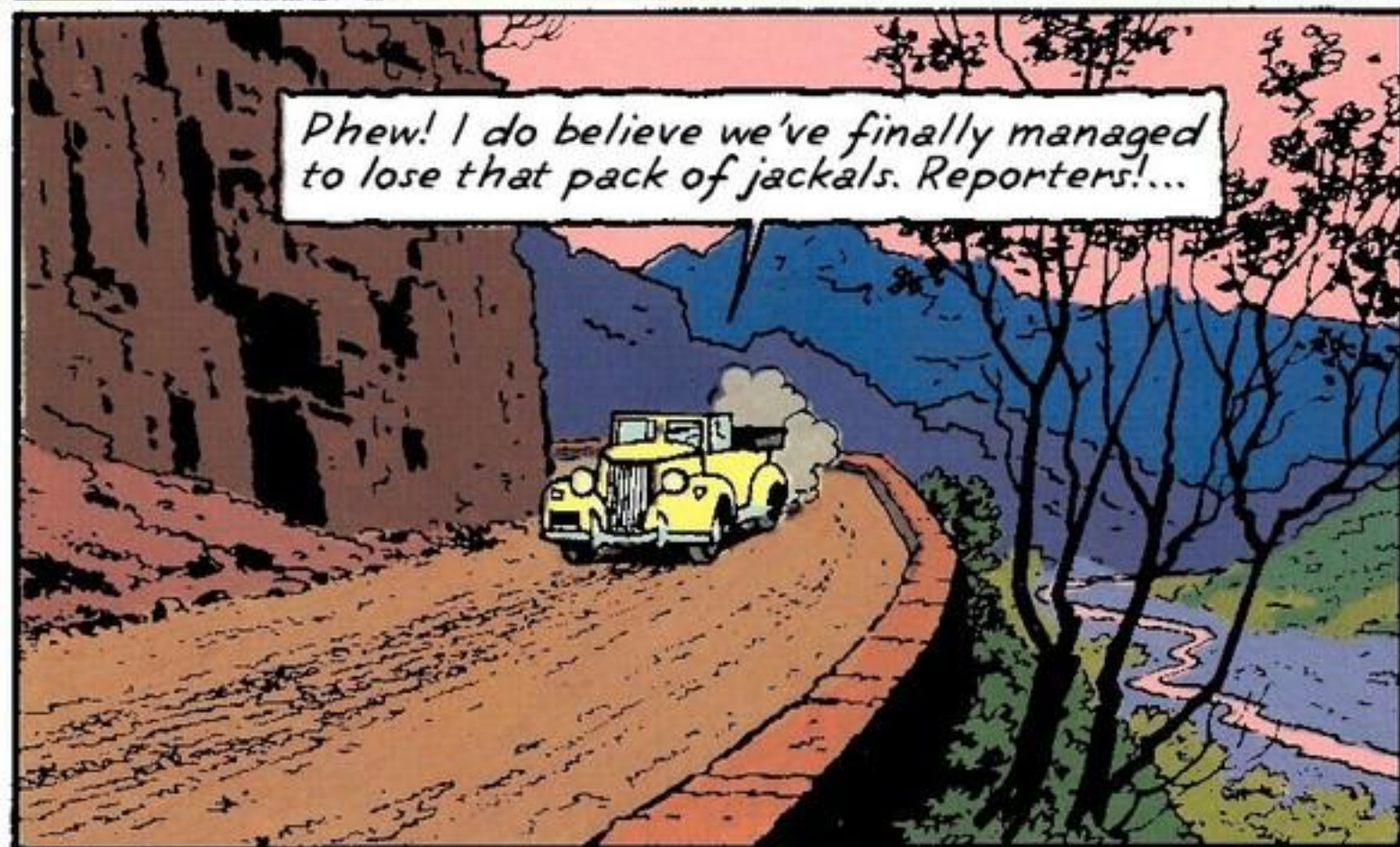
But you seem to have neglected the fact that, according to Plato, this extraordinary orichalcum was used to craft jewellery and household items, and even to build defensive walls. I have a hard time imagining such things being radioactive!...

Of course I raised the same objections myself, and I concluded that only a more complete exploration of the cave would let us verify this crazy theory! That's why I asked you to join me here to help me solve this mystery, old friend.

All right! Count on me, old boy! All the more because we're not the only ones interested in that metal!...

Good show, Francis! I knew you'd agree! I'll call my guide Pépé immediately. We should be ready in four or five days!

FIVE DAYS LATER, AT DAWN, BLAKE AND MORTIMER ARE DRIVING FAST ON THE ROAD TO POVOÇÃO. PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION HAVE BEEN MADE SWIFTLY, AND IN ORDER TO THROW JOURNALISTS AND POTENTIAL SPIES OFF THE SCENT, PÉPÉ HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASSEMBLE THE EQUIPMENT AND PORTERS IN A SECRET PLACE.



Phew! I do believe we've finally managed to lose that pack of jackals. Reporters!...

Haven't they tried to get our guide to speak?

Of course they have! They even attempted to bribe him. But that good man told them that we wouldn't be leaving 'til next week... We can trust him!...



AND YET, AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE "GOOD MAN" IS HAVING AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH THREE FELLOWS DRESSED UP AS LOCALS. ONE OF THEM IS NONE OTHER THAN THE INFAMOUS OLRİK...

Is not very honest, what I'm doing. Hiring you instead of my porters!

I'm telling you, these gentlemen and I are journalists! Come, now. This should be enough to silence your scruples... And don't worry about the rest!...



FIVE MINUTES LATER...

Careful, now! Call me Luis!...

Hello, laddies!



AFTER A CAREFUL REVIEW OF HIS TROOPS, MORTIMER TURNS TOWARDS THE GUIDE:

Nothing strange, then? Did you see anyone nosing around the place?

Não, senhor!*



And you will vouch for your assistants, of course?...

My assistants?... Er!... Naturalmente, senhor...



*NO, SIR!

BUT NEITHER BLAKE NOR MORTIMER SUSPECTS THAT ONE OF THE TEAM'S MEN IS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH TWO INDIVIDUALS HIDDEN A COUPLE OF MILES AWAY, INSIDE A SHEPHERD'S HUT...

You're leaving?... OK... Be careful... Understood!...



THE SUN HAS NOW FULLY RISEN. AFTER AN EXHAUSTING WALK, THE SMALL PARTY HAS FINALLY REACHED THE ENTRANCE TO THE CHASM AND IMMEDIATELY SETS UP CAMP THERE... FULLY DECKED OUT, OUR TWO FRIENDS ARE GETTING READY FOR THE TRIP DOWN. BUT OLRİK, WHO'S GOING WITH THEM, SWIFTLY SLIPS OVER TO ONE OF HIS ACCOMPLICES...

Keep an eye on Pépé... And if he should think about changing his mind...

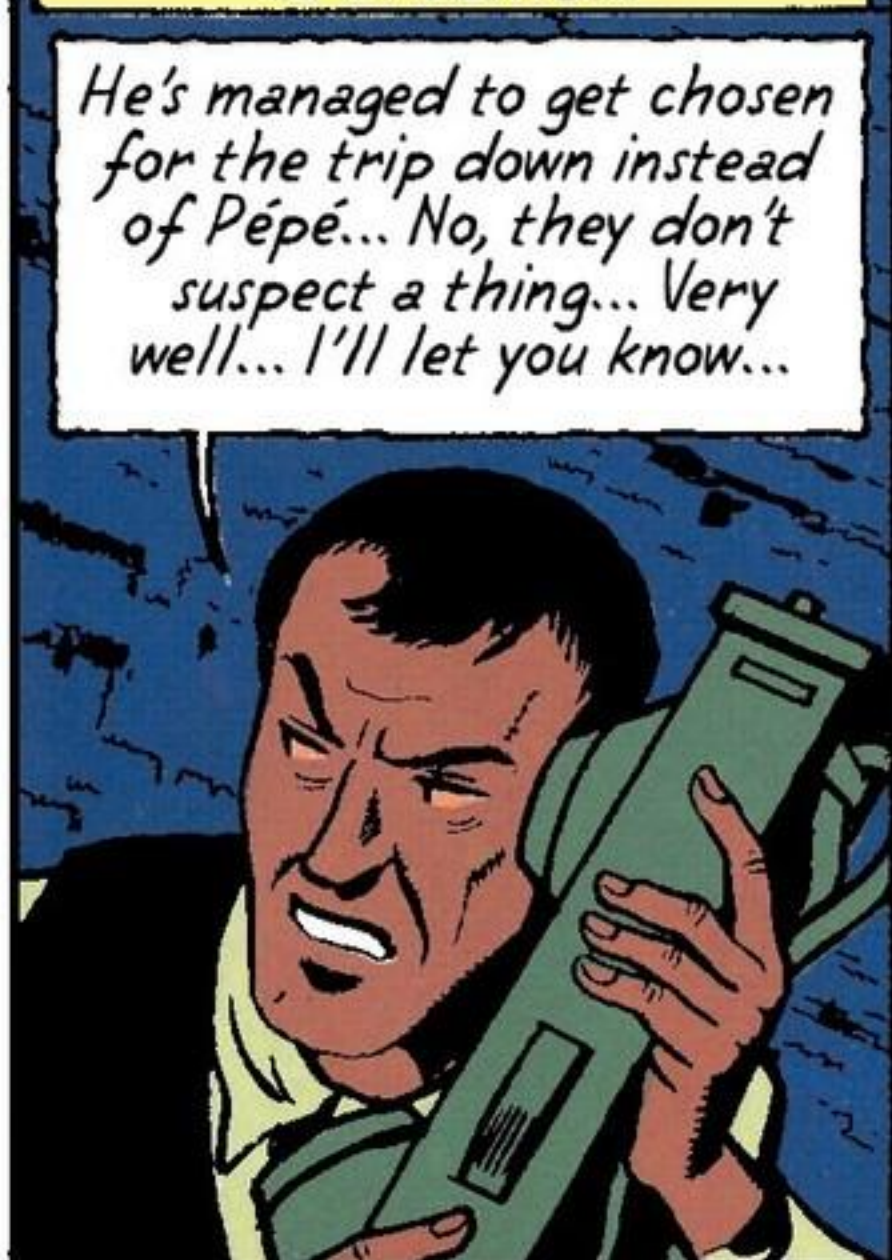
Understood!...

You're ready, Francis. Go ahead!



MEANWHILE, THE MAN WITH THE WALKIE-TALKIE IS CALLING...

He's managed to get chosen for the trip down instead of Pépé... No, they don't suspect a thing... Very well... I'll let you know...



Understood, then? If the weather shows signs of changing, call us right away!

De acordo, senhor*...



*VERY WELL, SIR.

MORTIMER HAVING JOINED BLAKE, OLRİK, WITH A LAST INTENT LOOK AT HIS MEN, FOLLOWS THEM DOWN INSIDE THE GAPING HOLE...



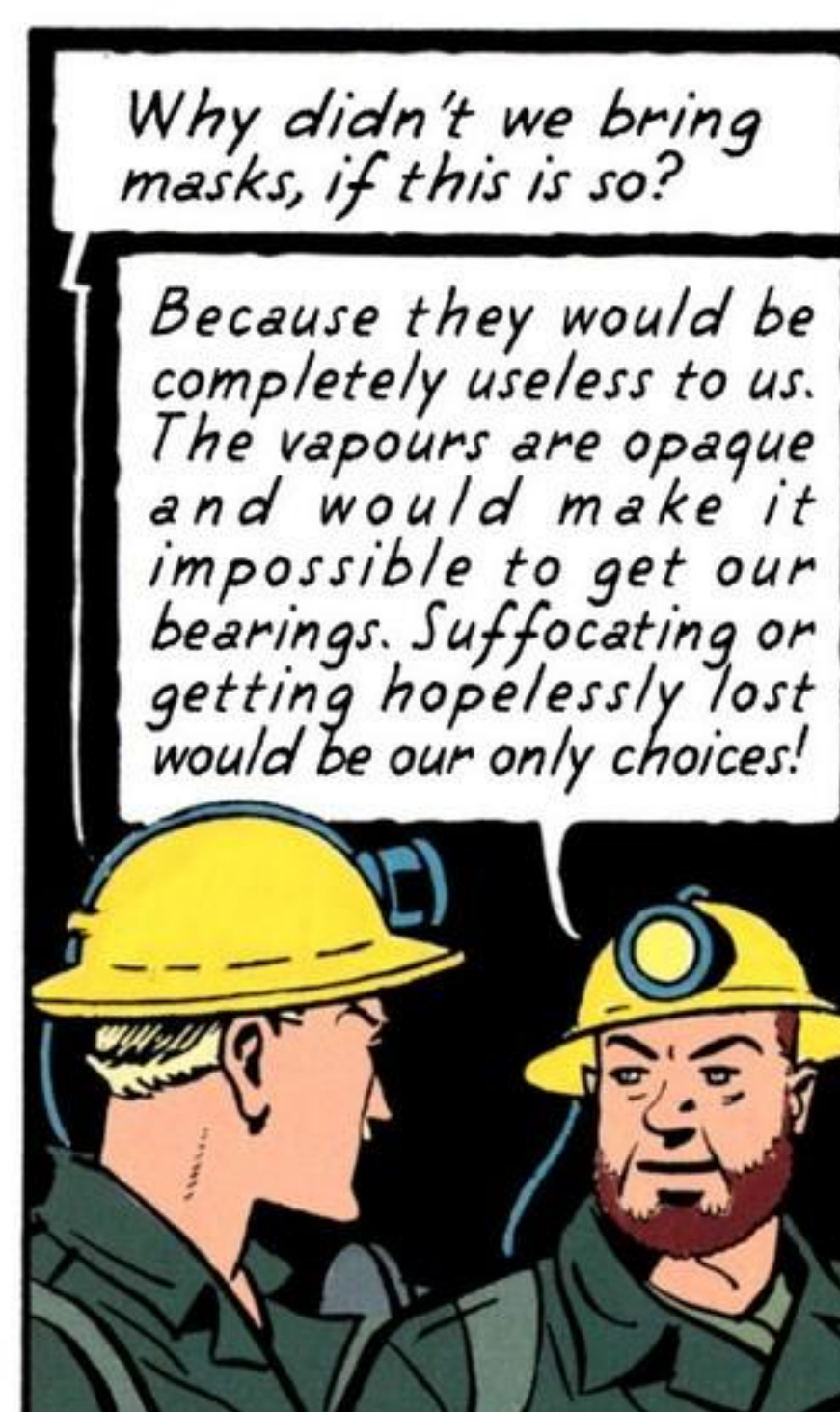
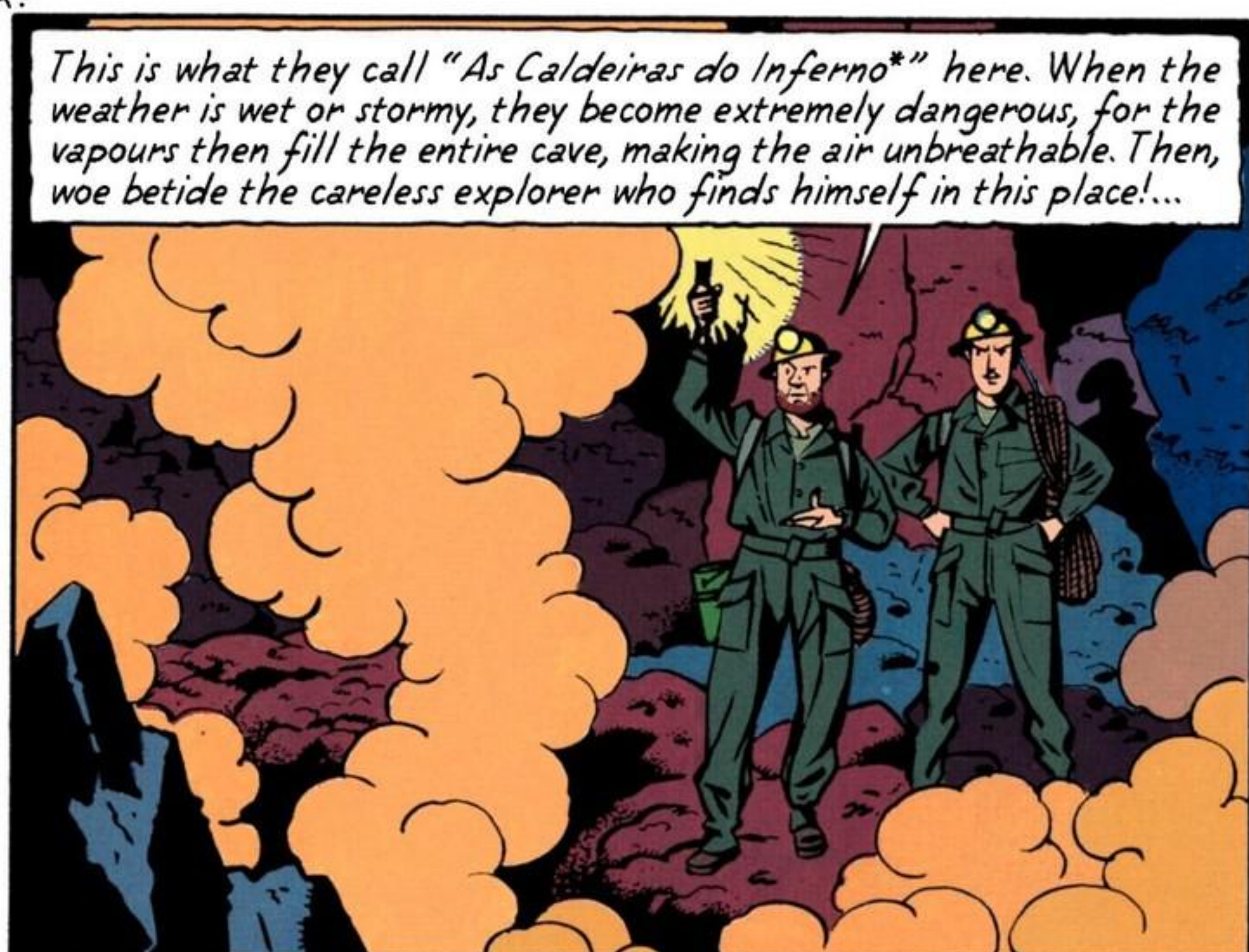
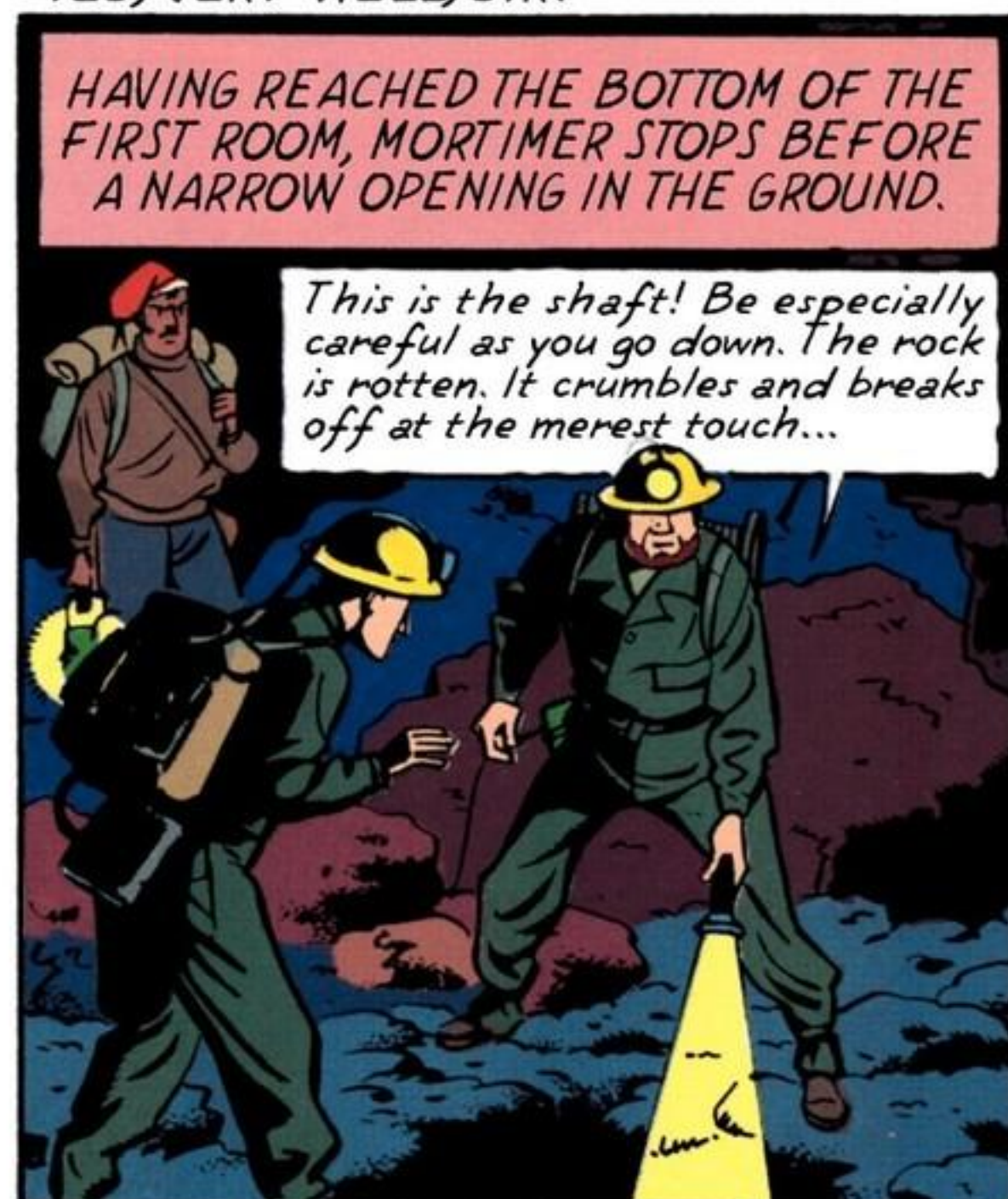
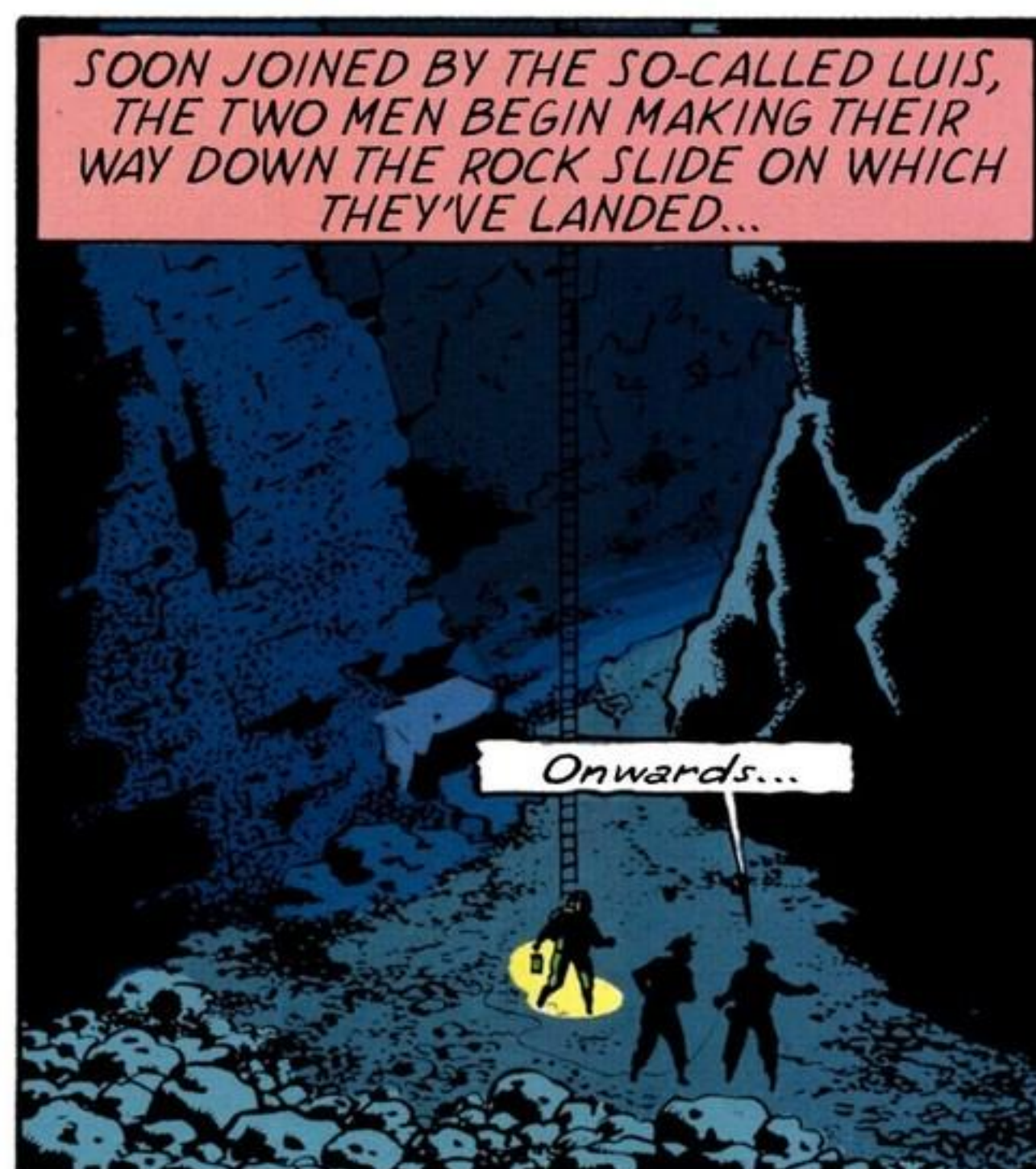
... WHILE INSIDE THE SHEPHERD'S HUT, IT'S TIME FOR REJOICING...

Well, Kurt, I think this one's a done deal!...





*YES, VERY WELL, SIR.



*I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THAT CLOUD!

MEANWHILE, 2,000 FEET BELOW THE SURFACE, THE THREE MEN HAVE RESUMED THEIR PROGRESS. CLIMBING OVER GIGANTIC ROCK PILES, GOING FROM MARK TO MARK, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE ROOM. FINALLY, AFTER SLIPPING BETWEEN TWO GREAT SLABS, THEY STOP BEFORE THE MASSIVE, FEATURELESS WALL...

See, Francis; we must reach that crawl there...

Hmm! It looks rather uninviting!...

HELPED BY HIS COMPANION, MORTIMER QUICKLY CLIMBS TO THE ENTRANCE...

Hnh! I'm there!...

... THEN BLAKE AND THE SO-CALLED LUIS JOIN HIM WITHOUT A HITCH, USING A ROPE HE'S THROWN THEM.

FINALLY, THE THREE OF THEM START CRAWLING DOWN THE NARROW TUNNEL...

A SHORT WHILE LATER, THE SMALL TEAM IS GATHERED ON A VAST LEDGE HALFWAY UP THE SHEER WALL OF A LARGE BOWL. ON THE BOTTOM, THE TRANSPARENT WATERS OF A LAKE GLIMMER GENTLY...

A MOMENT LATER...

Hello, Pépé?... What's new? A sudden fog?... That's strange, indeed... Well, Luis will remain on the line with you, and if it should become worse, let him know right away...

PROGRESS IS SLOW AND EXHAUSTING. THEIR FACES TENSE WITH THE EFFORT, THEIR CHESTS AND SHOULDERS CONSTRICTED, THEIR HELMETS SCRAPING AGAINST THE ROCK, THE THREE MEN STRUGGLE CONSIDERABLY... AT LAST, AFTER 60 FEET OF ARDUOUS CRAWLING, MORTIMER PULLS HIMSELF AWAY FROM THE NERVE-RACKING EMBRACE OF THE ROCK WITH ONE LAST EFFORT. IN A BREATHELESS BUT TRIUMPHANT VOICE, HE UTTERS THE TRADITIONAL WORDS...

... I'm through!!!...

Is this it?

Yes... Go ahead—you'll find the equipment I left here on my first trip... As for me, I'm going to establish communication with Pépé...

THEN, HAVING GIVEN THE SAME INSTRUCTIONS TO LUIS, MORTIMER HURRIEDLY JOINS BLAKE, WHO'S BUSY INFLATING TWO RAFTS...

Hello! Do you have the Geiger?

Don't worry, everything's here!

It's unsettling. Looking up at these sheer walls, I can't help but be acutely and frighteningly reminded of how much we depend on the people we left on the surface...

Ha, ha! Are you getting claustrophobic?... Come on, let's get to work!

HAVING PUSHED THEIR RAFTS INTO THE WATER, THE CAPTAIN AND THE PROFESSOR SLOWLY BEGIN TO FOLLOW THE NARROW SHORE...

There! This is about the spot where I found the shard!

Well, let's search the lake methodically. If that doesn't yield any results, we'll go have a look inside the tunnel...

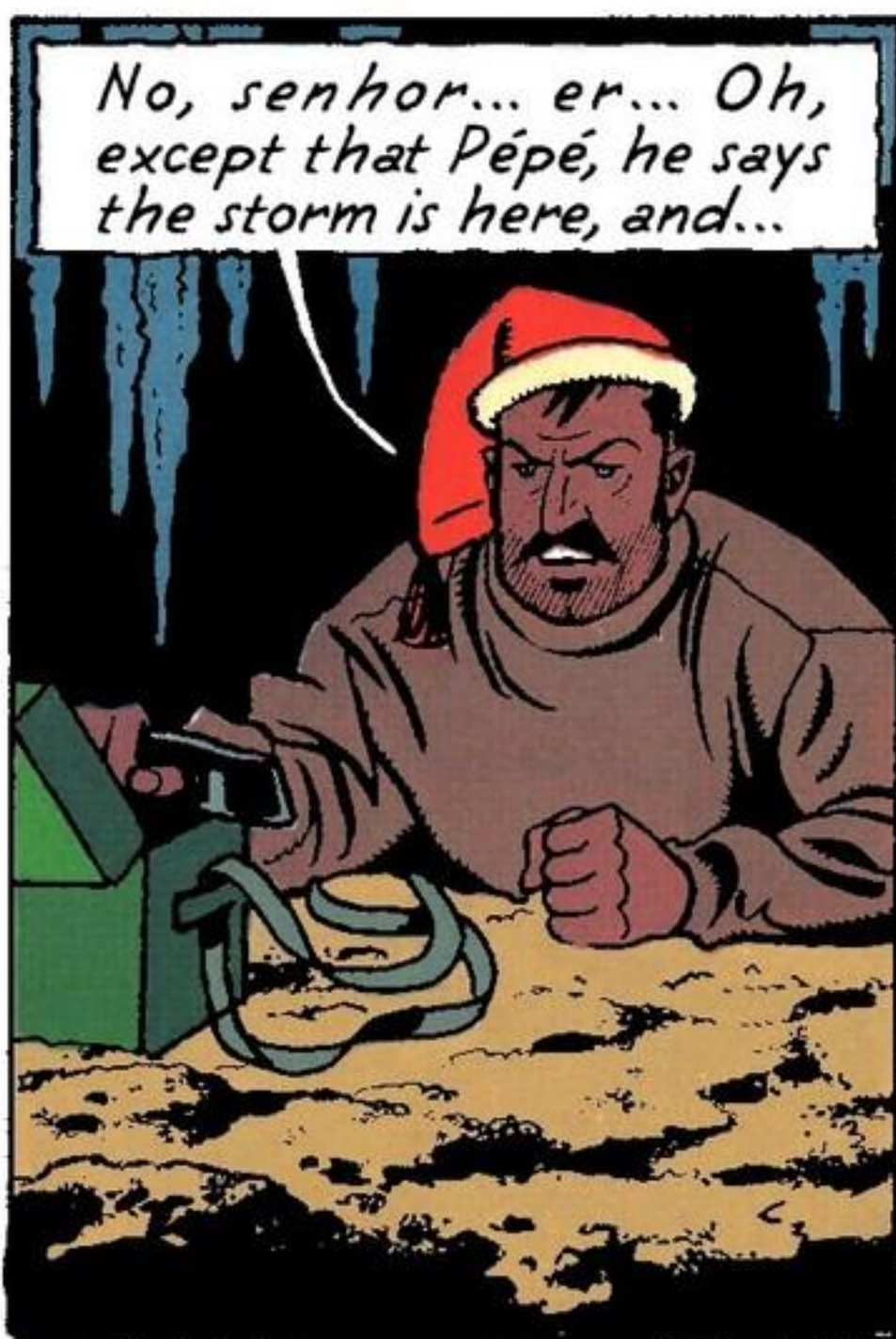
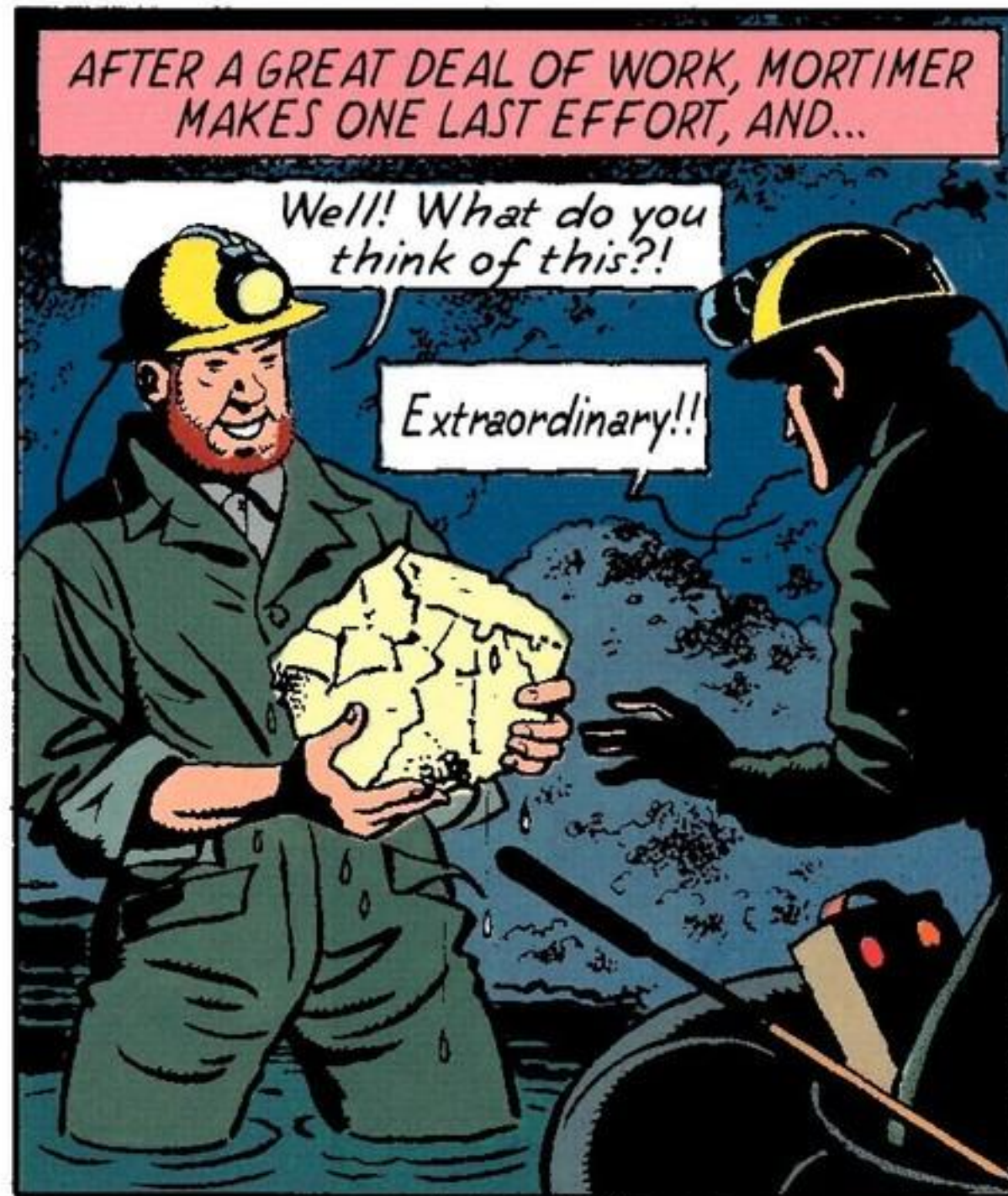
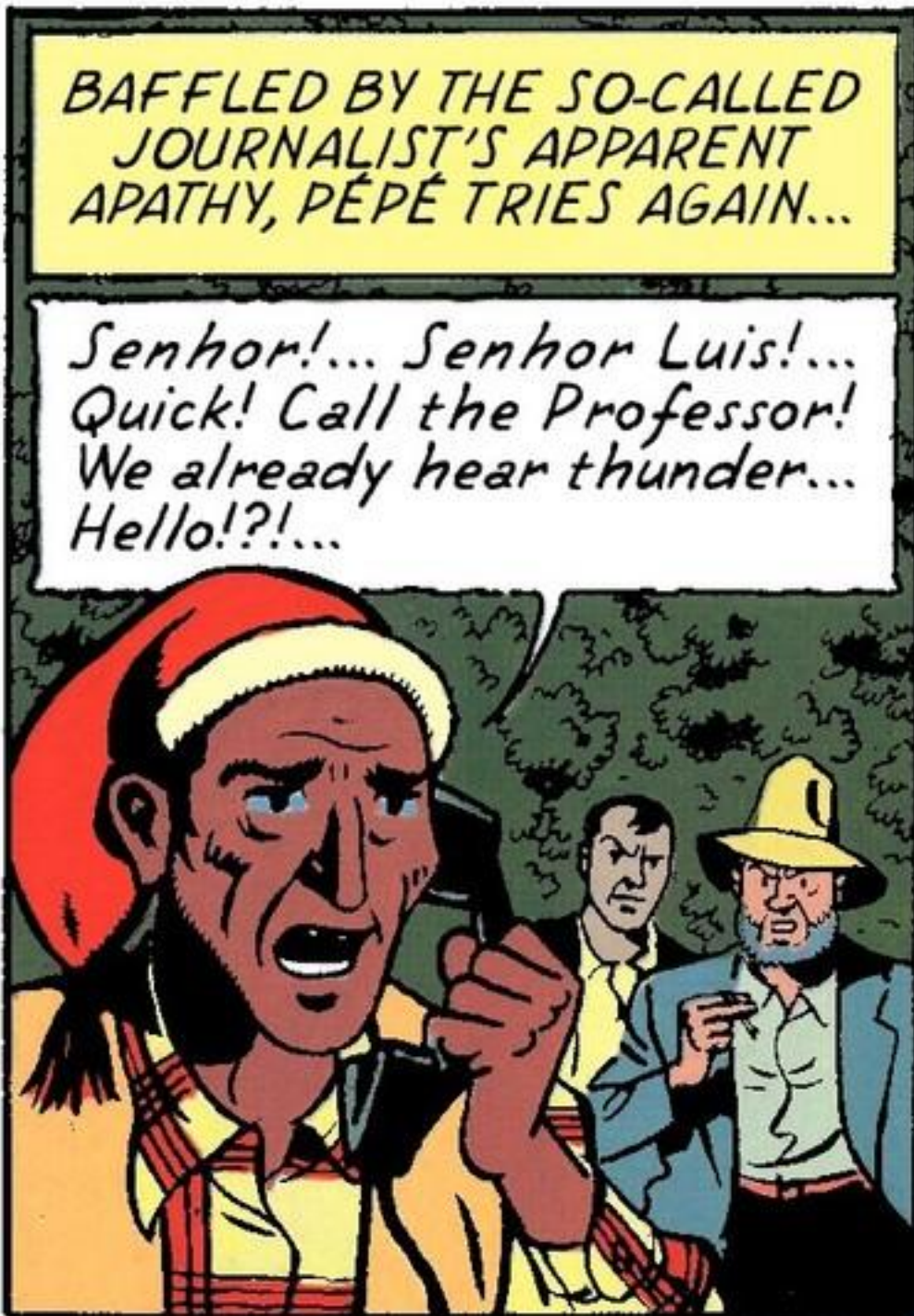
SLOWLY, THE TINY BOATS BEGIN CRISS-CROSSING THE CALM WATERS. SOON, THREE-QUARTERS OF THE LAKE HAVE BEEN SEARCHED...

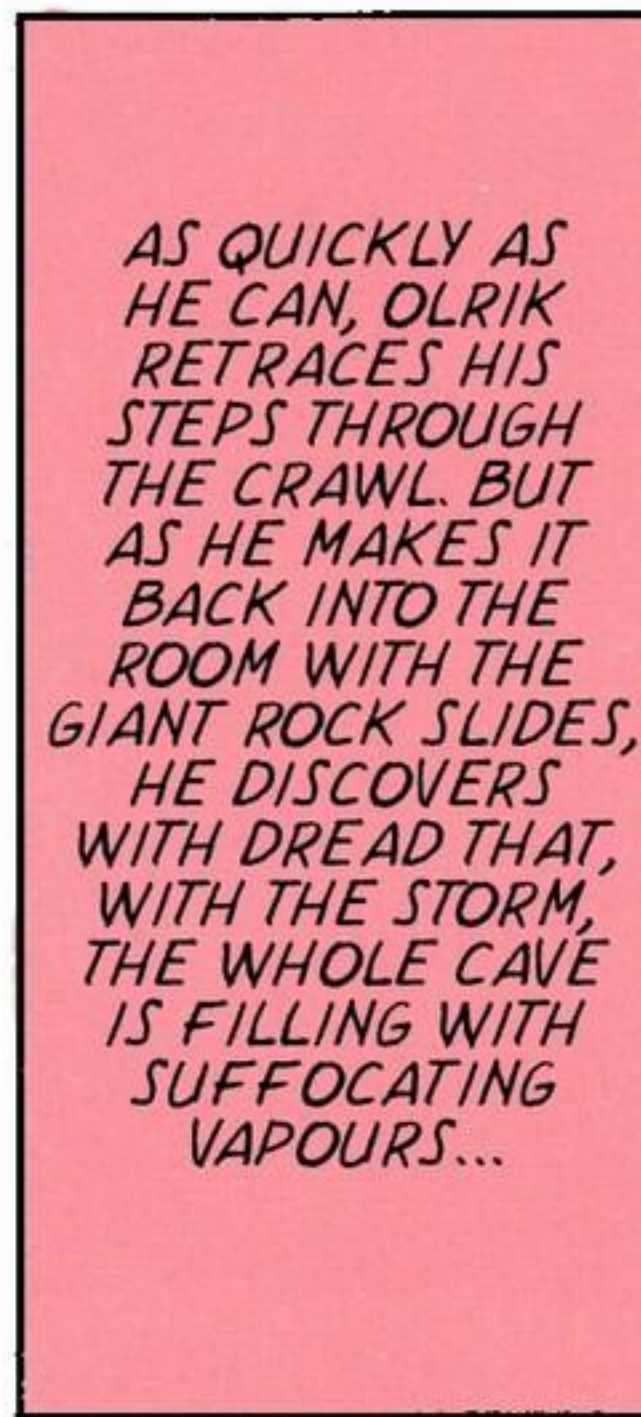
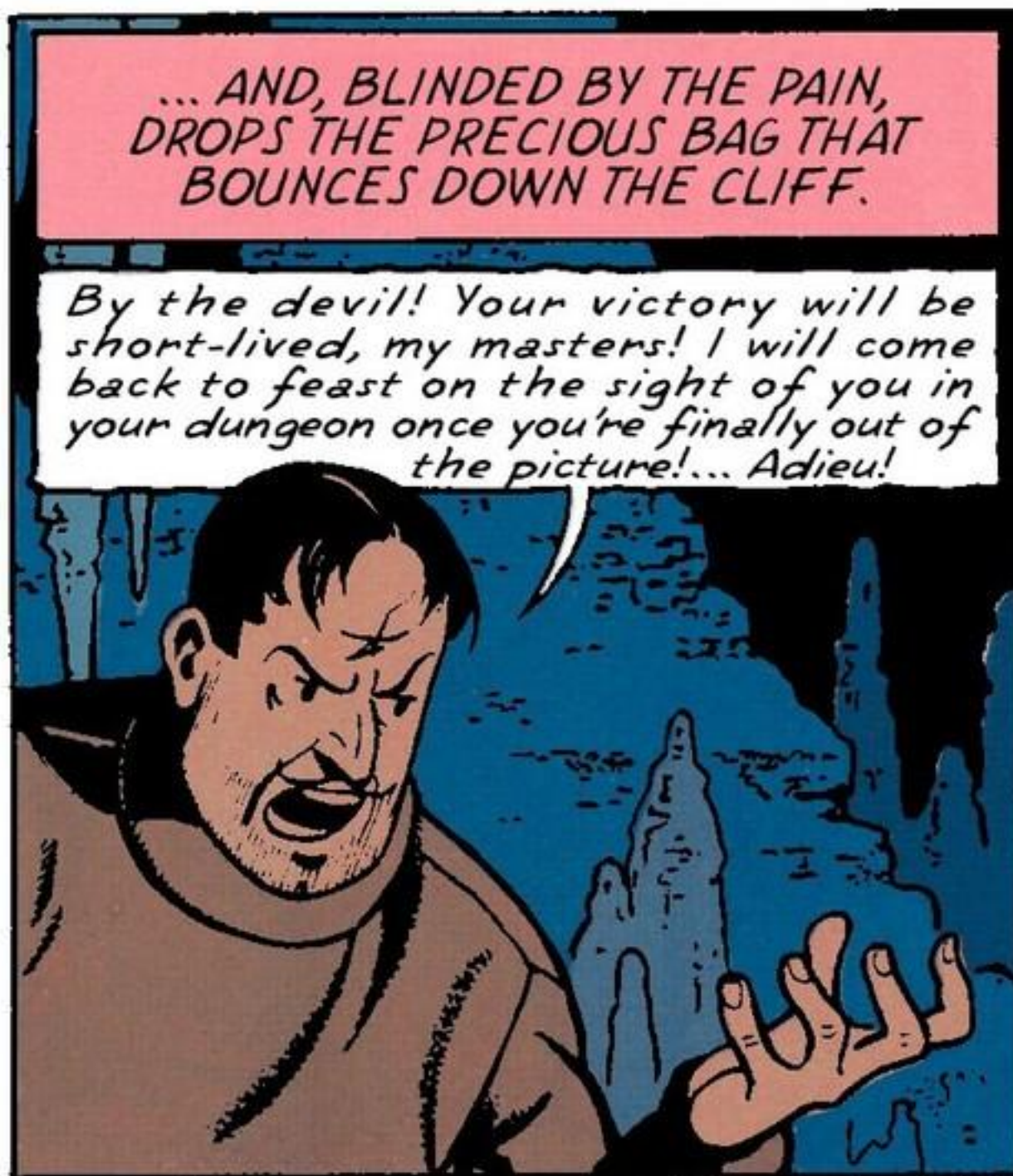
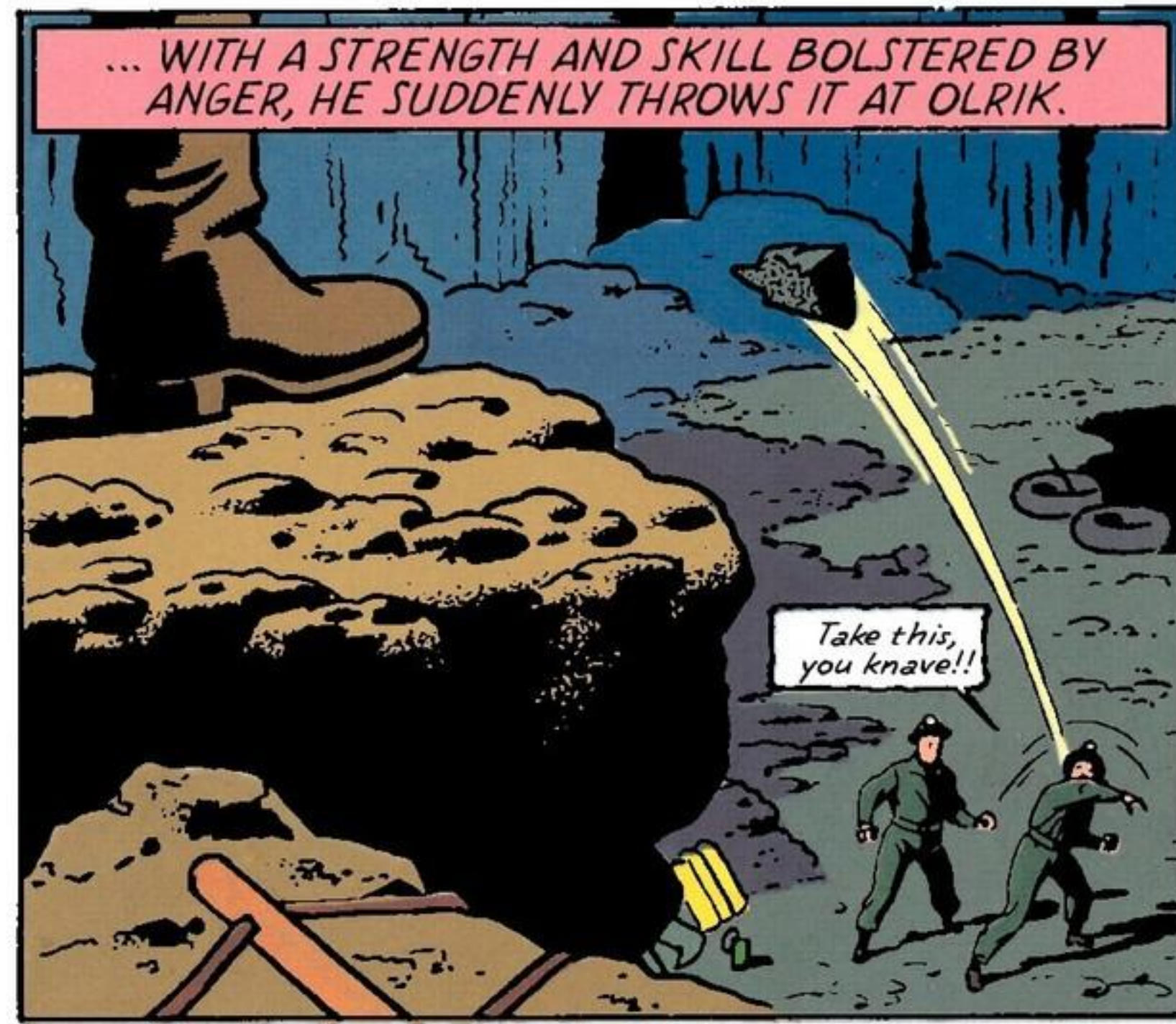
It'd be quite unbelievable if there was only one specimen here of...

Shhh! Listen!

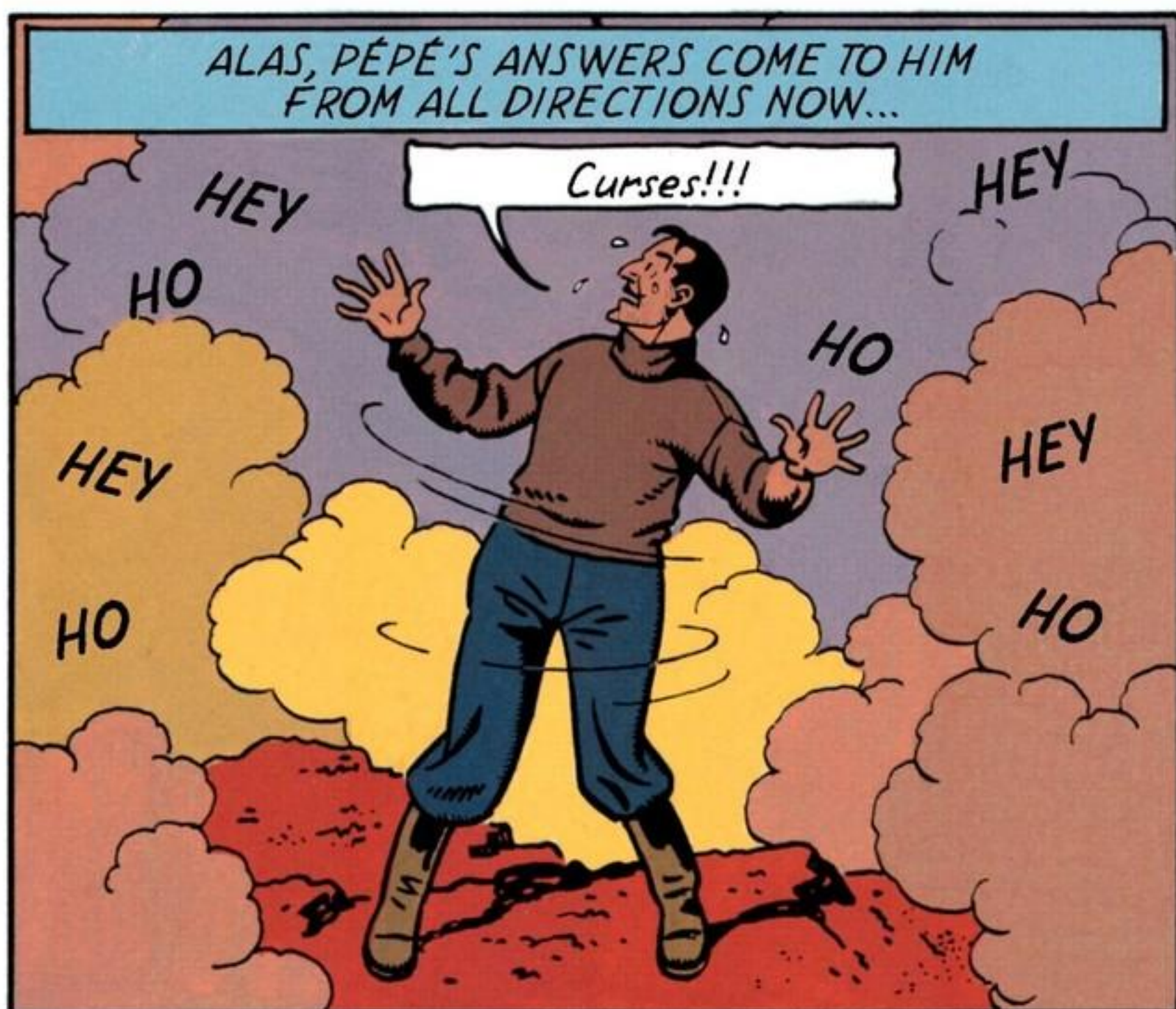
INDEED, THE GEIGER COUNTER HAS JUST BEGUN TO EMIT ITS CHARACTERISTIC SOUNDS.

BOP BOP BOP

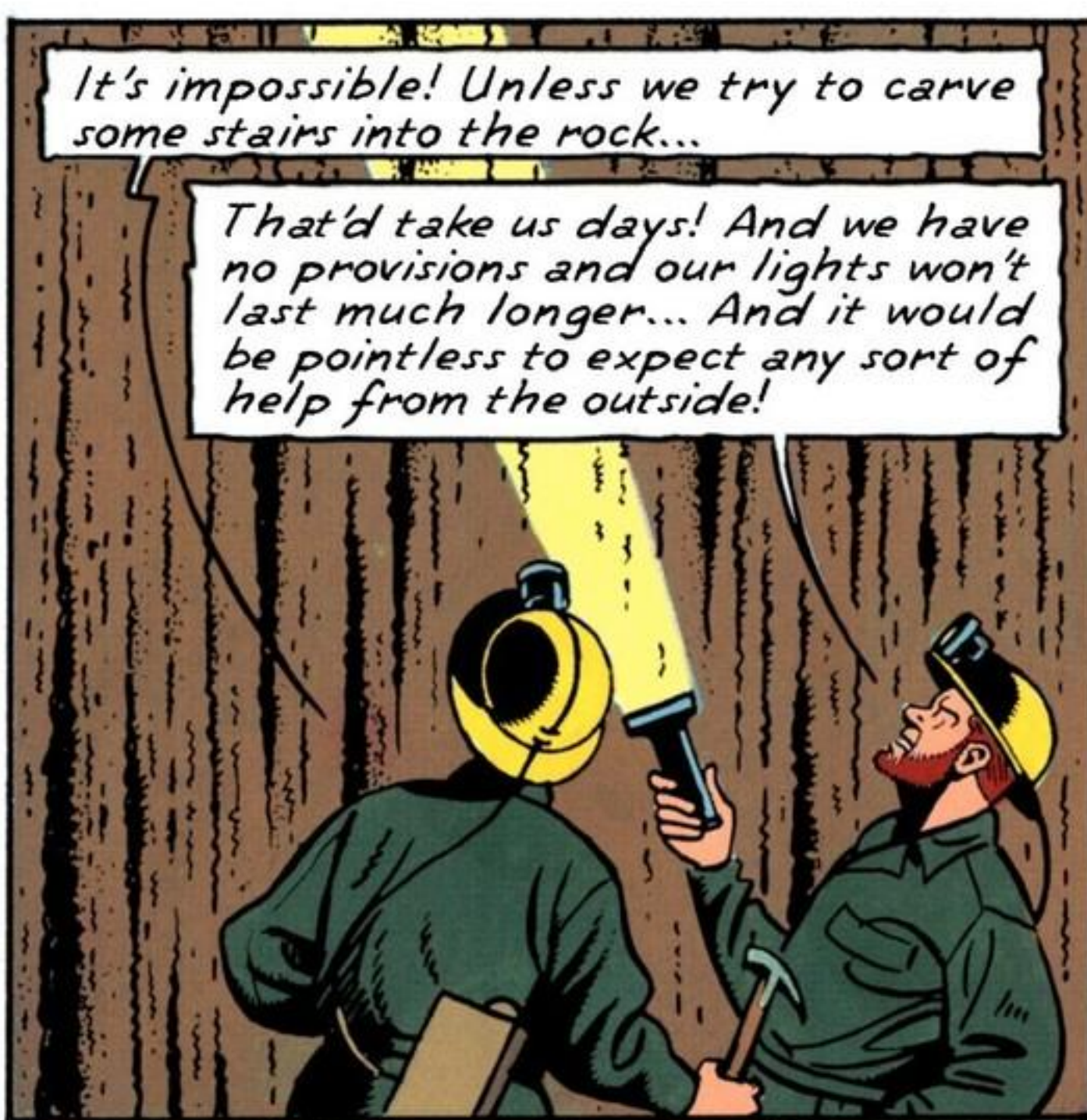




FACED WITH THAT TERRIBLE REALISATION, OLRİK HAS LEAPT TO HIS FEET. HE TRIES TO FIND HIS BEARINGS, BUT HIS LAMP HAS GOT LOST IN HIS FALL, AND THE CHOKING SULPHUROUS EMANATIONS THAT KEEP BUILDING UP ARE MAKING HIS EFFORTS MOOT. COUGHING, TEARS POURING FROM HIS EYES, HE WANDERS IN A HAZE OF RAGE AND TERROR...



WHILE THE TREACHEROUS OLRİK, HOISTED WITH HIS OWN PETARD, VANISHES INTO THE DEPTHS, BLAKE AND MORTIMER ARE STILL ON THE SHORE OF THE GREEN LAKE AND, AFTER SEVERAL FAILED ATTEMPTS, HAVE GIVEN UP ON CLIMBING THE HIGH WALLS THAT SURROUND THEM ON ALL SIDES...





Good Lord! The caldeiras!
Back! Back!...

INDEED, BELCHING FORTH FROM THE CRAWL AS WELL AS FROM A HUNDRED CRACKS, THE YELLOW CURLS OF THE SULPHUROUS VAPOURS ARE BEGINNING TO POUR INTO THE BOWL... HASTILY GRABBING SOME OF THEIR EQUIPMENT, BLAKE AND MORTIMER HURRY BACK TO THEIR INFLATABLE RAFTS.



This way, Francis!

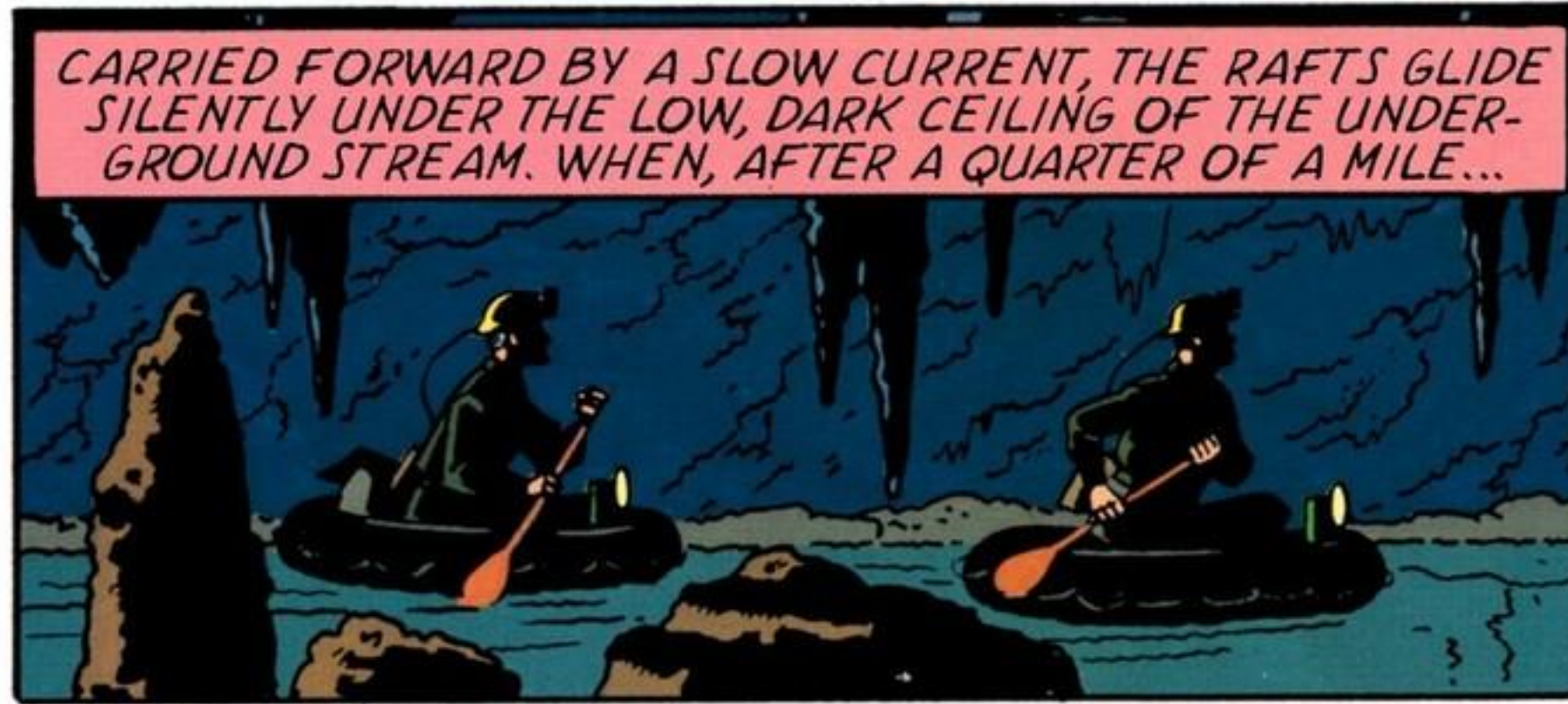


Quick! In a moment we won't be able to see a thing!...



Just in time! The lake's almost completely disappeared!

I don't understand! These phenomena don't usually occur on such a scale!



CARRIED FORWARD BY A SLOW CURRENT, THE RAFTS GLIDE SILENTLY UNDER THE LOW, DARK CEILING OF THE UNDERGROUND STREAM. WHEN, AFTER A QUARTER OF A MILE...



Well! Listen to the Geiger: There must be some orichalcum around here!

Indeed, I can see a pale gleam ahead... and two more a tad further!...



AS THEY DRIFT ONWARDS, THE MINERAL OUTCROPS BECOME MORE AND MORE NUMEROUS, UNTIL THE ENTIRE RIVER HAS BECOME LUMINESCENT...

By Jove! We must have found the mother lode!



BUT MORTIMER, WHO'D BEEN LOOKING AT THE CEILING FOR SOME TIME, COMMENTS...

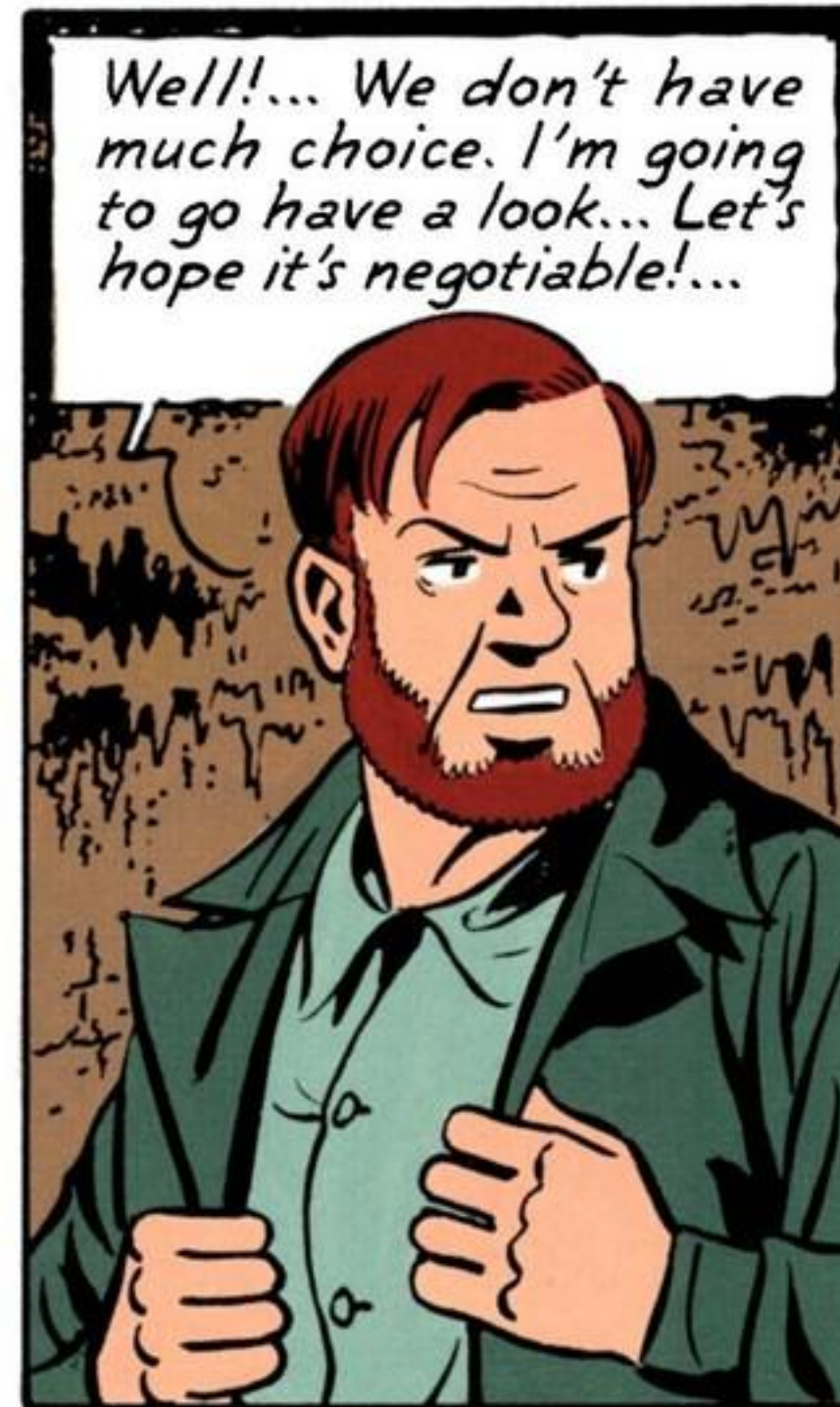
Look, it's getting lower and lower! Not a good sign!



INDEED, THE TWO MEN SOON DISCOVER THAT THE CEILING, HAVING GOT LOWER STILL, HAS REACHED THE SURFACE AND DISAPPEARS BELOW IT...

I knew it... A siphon!...

Goodness! What shall we do? We don't have any diving equipment!...



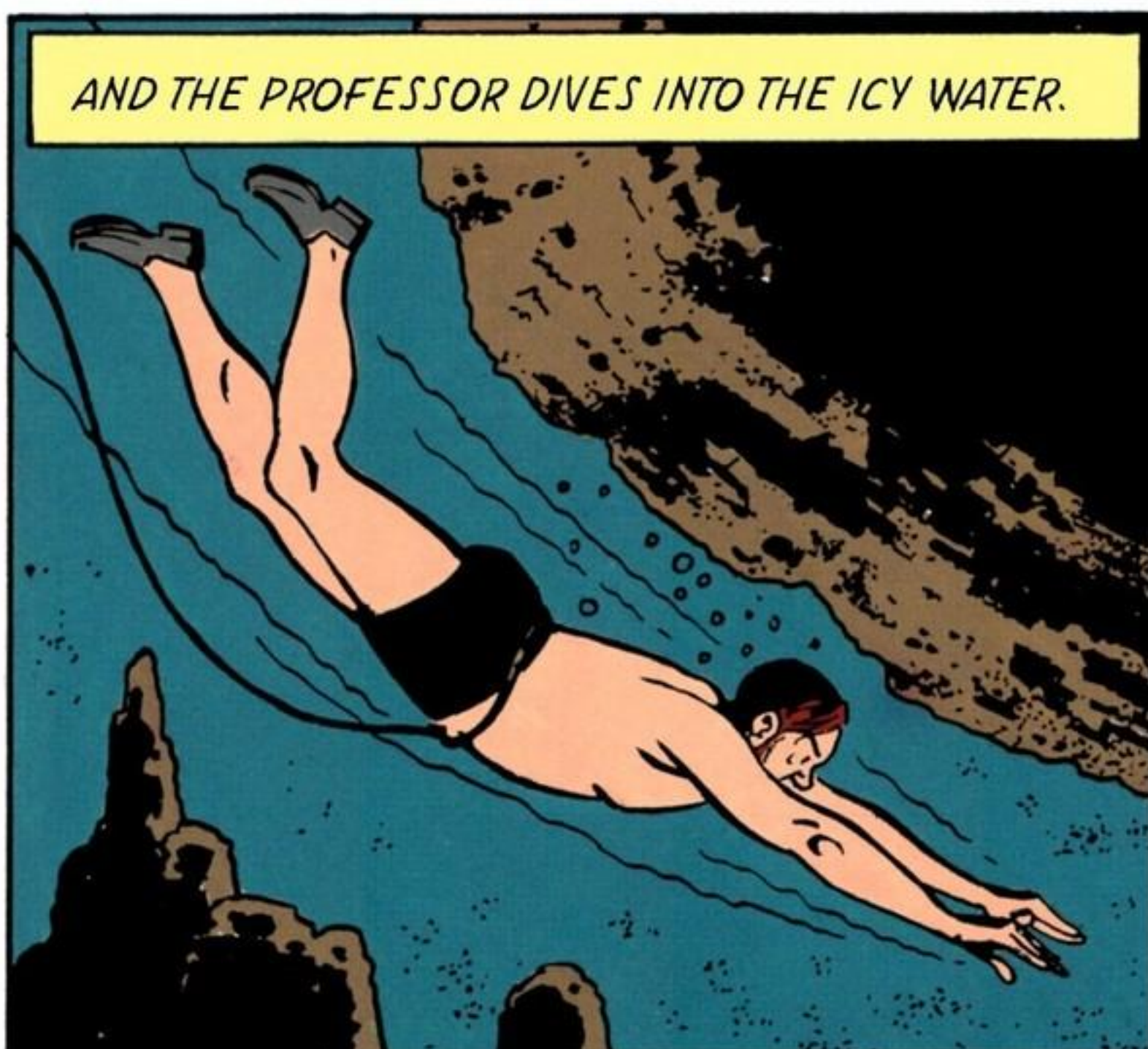
Well!... We don't have much choice. I'm going to go have a look... Let's hope it's negotiable!...



HAVING QUICKLY UNDRESSED, MORTIMER HAS GONE INTO THE WATER, A ROPE TIED AROUND HIS WAIST...

We're agreed, then. One tug: "Give me some slack." Two: "I'm through." Three: "I'm coming back." Several: "I'm in trouble."

All right.



AND THE PROFESSOR DIVES INTO THE ICY WATER.



BLAKE IS FOCUSED ON THE ROPE THAT SWIFTLY PLAYS OUT BETWEEN HIS FINGERS.

One... One... One... Again!... one, two! Ah, he must be through!...

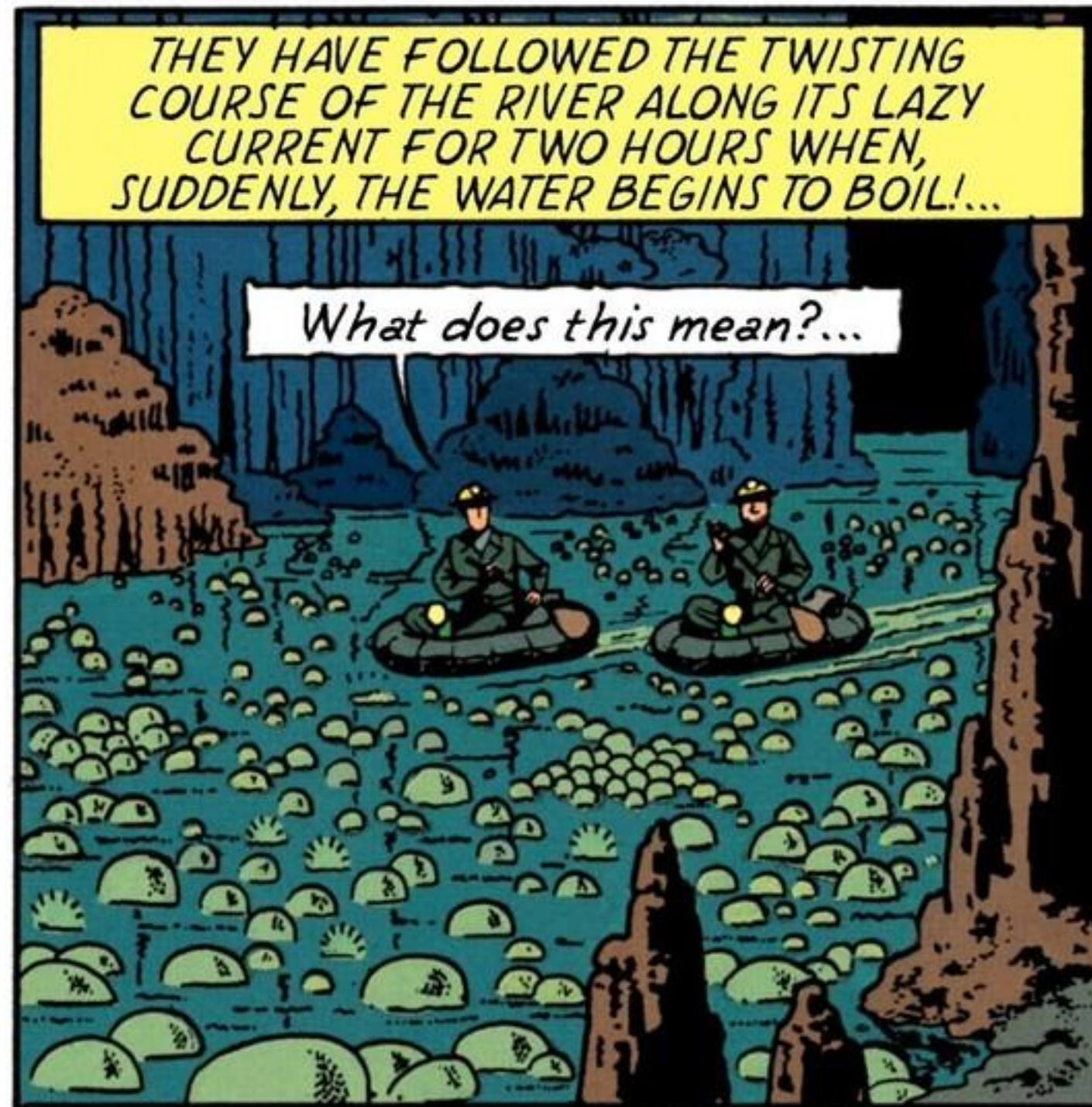
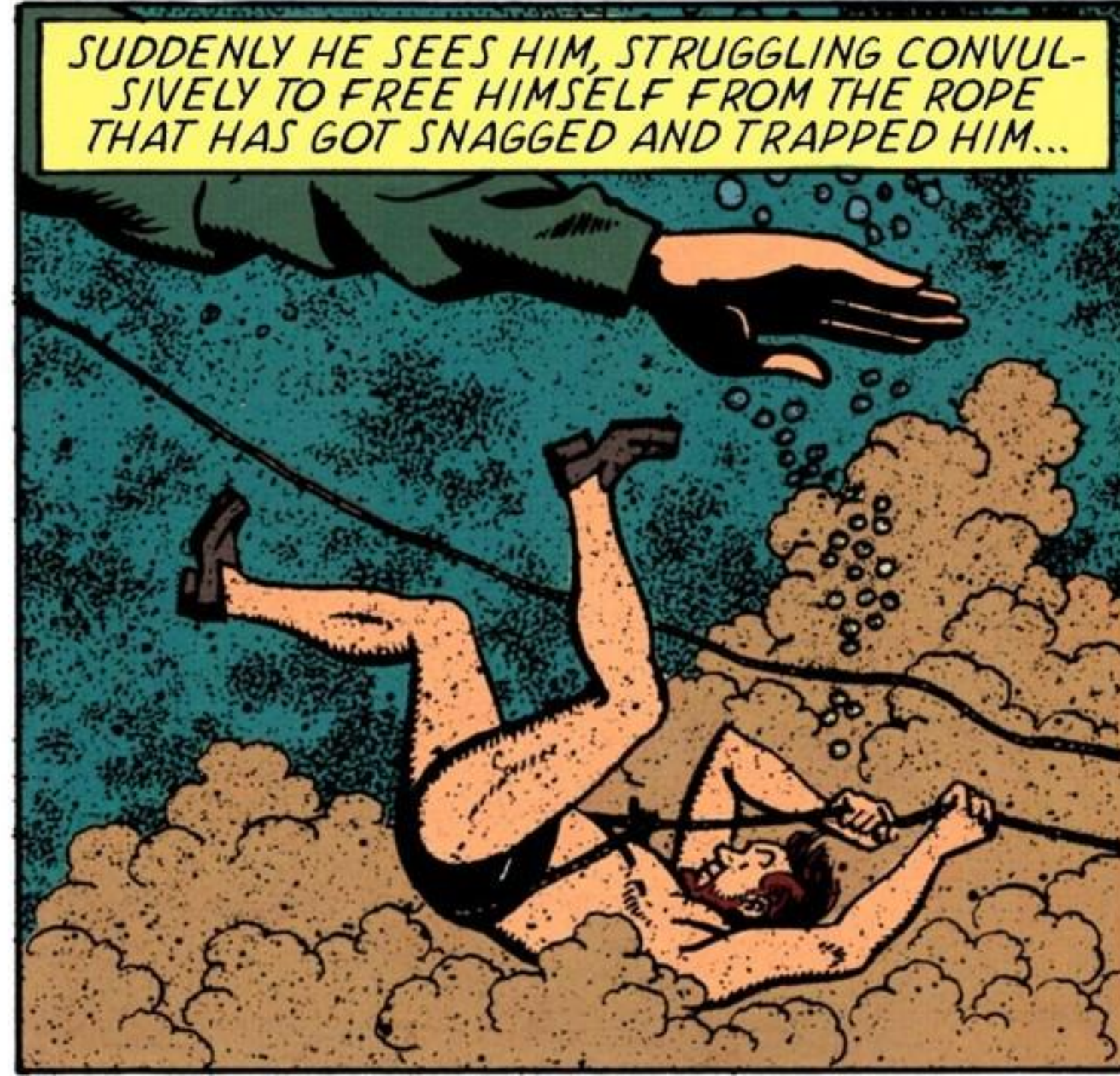


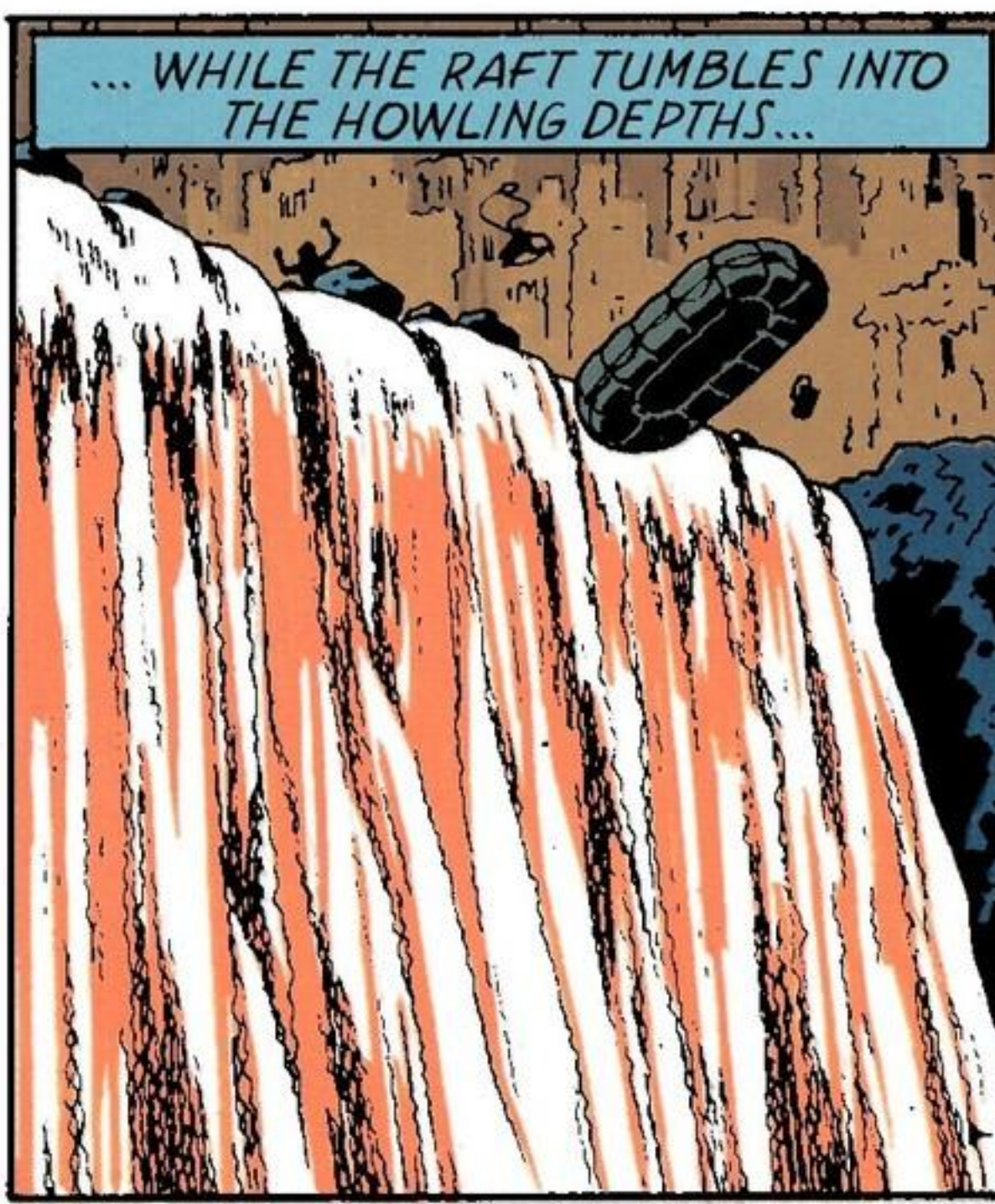
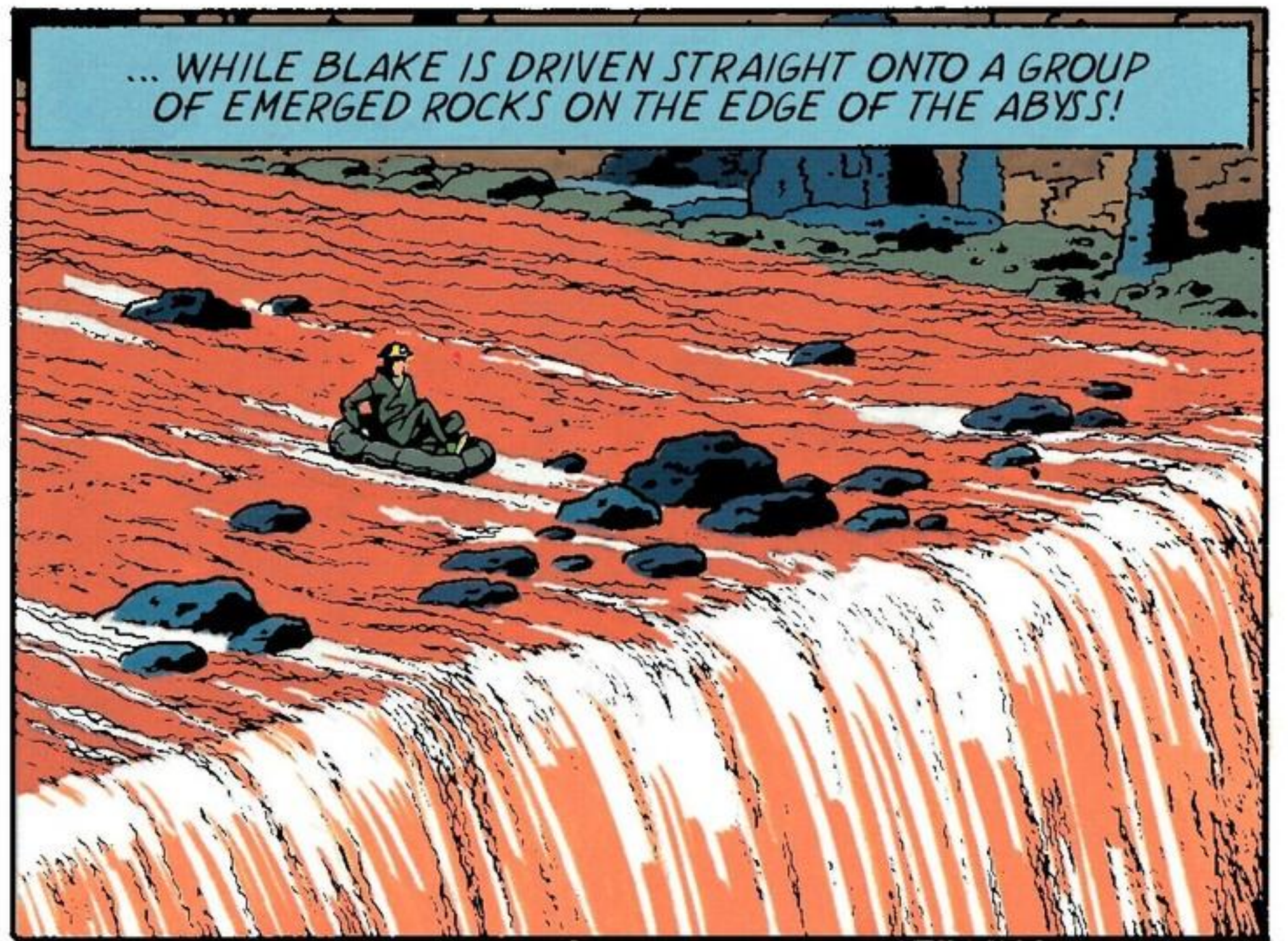
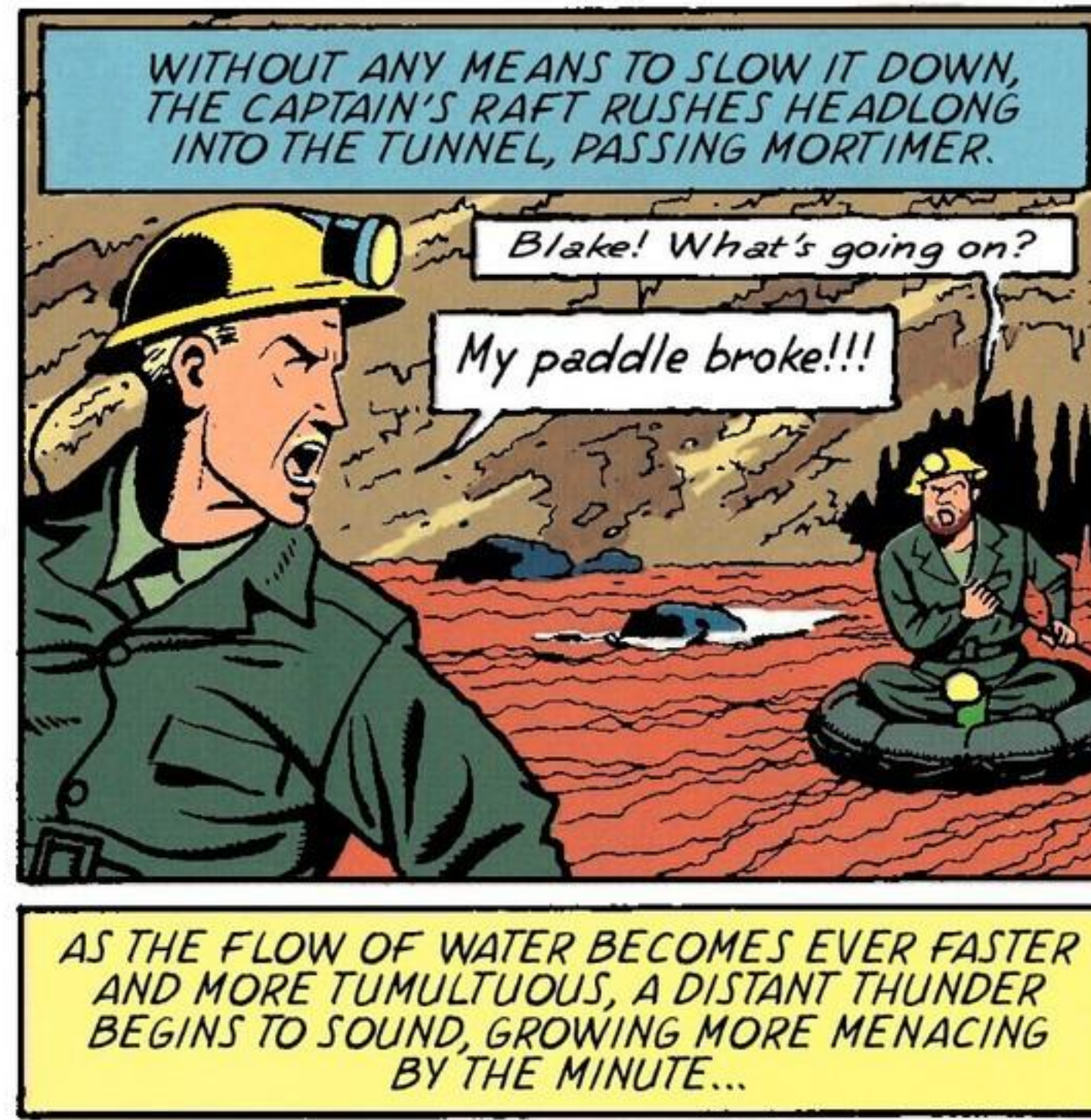
What's keeping him, then?... Ah, finally! One... two... three... he's coming back! Oh, but what's this?... Four... five... Good Lord!!

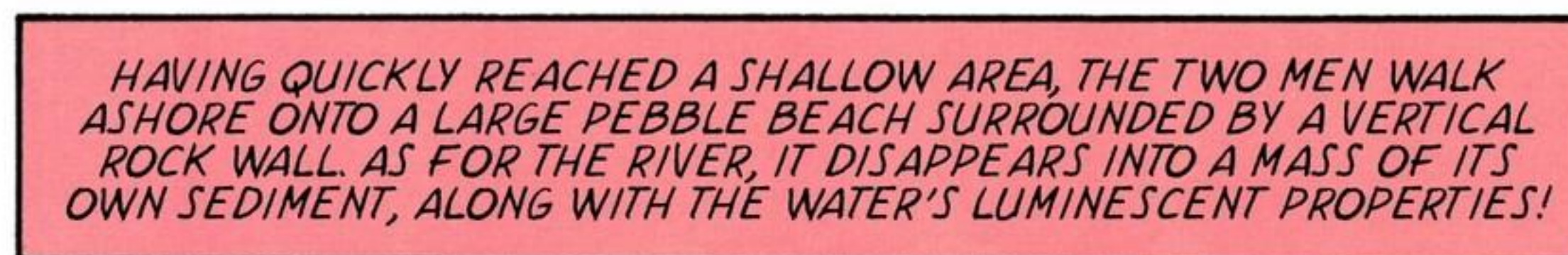


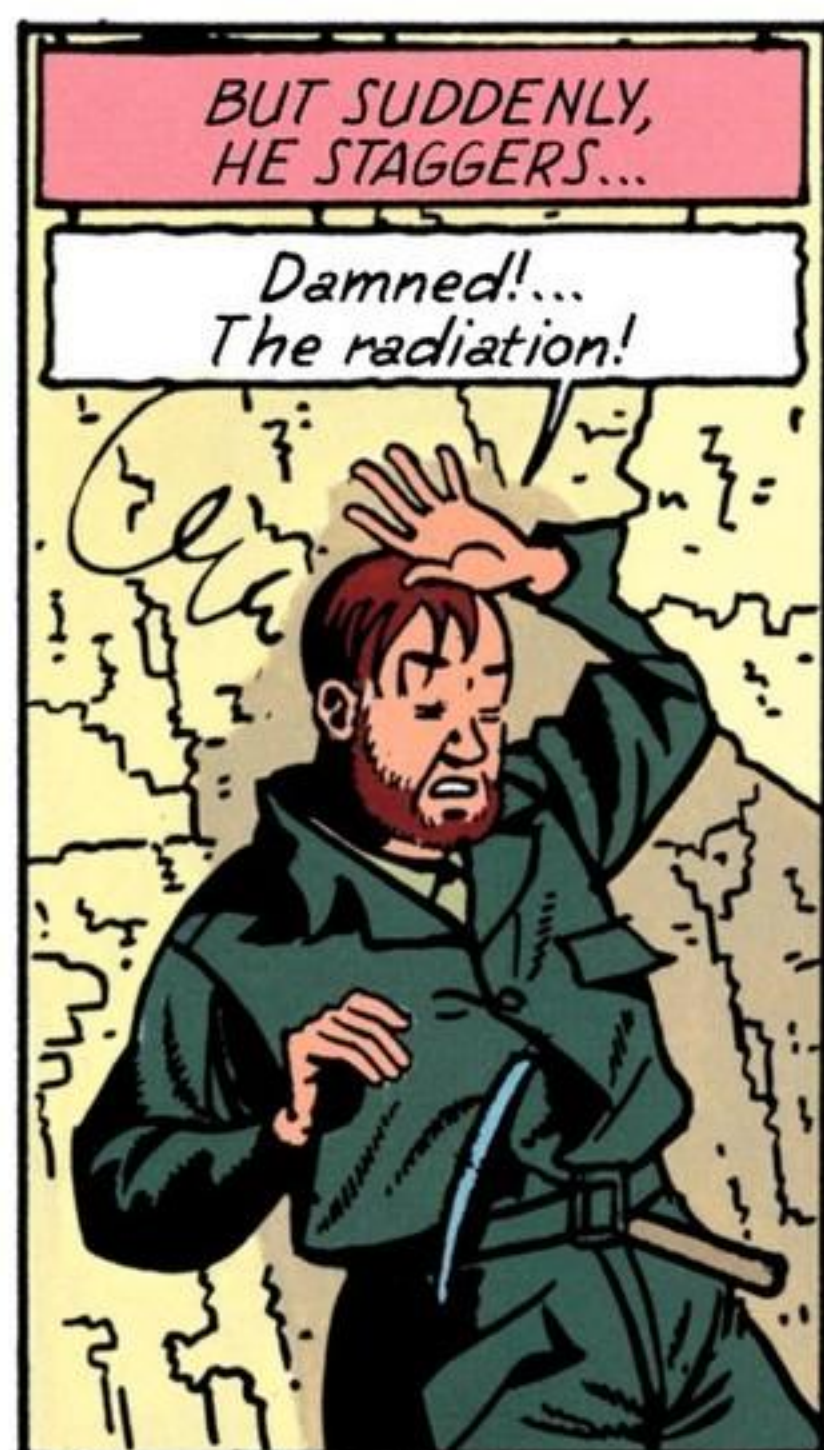
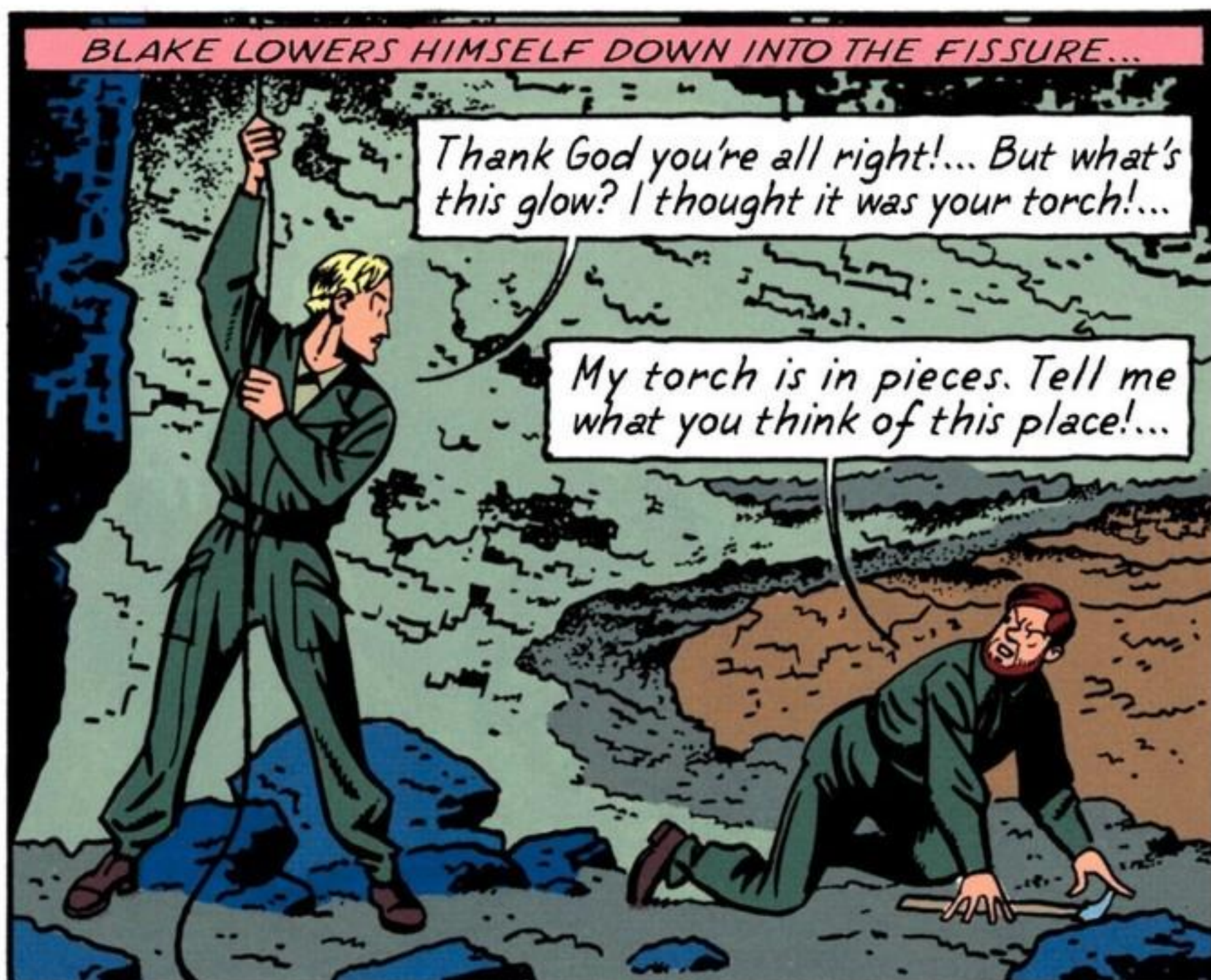
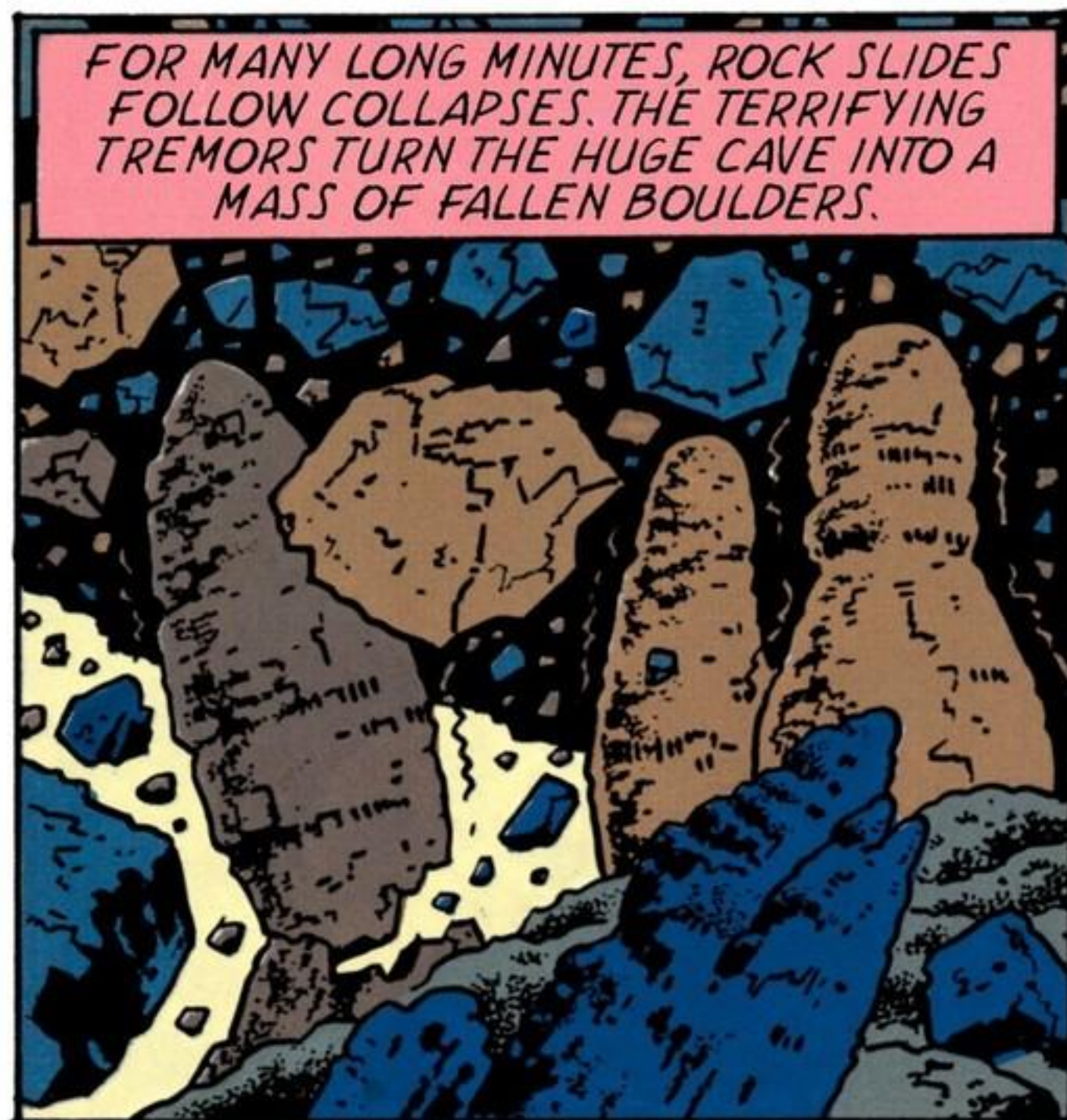
PUTTING ALL HIS STRENGTH INTO IT, BLAKE IMMEDIATELY HAULS ON THE ROPE TO BRING HIS COMPANION BACK. BUT IT RESISTS HIS MIGHTIEST EFFORTS...

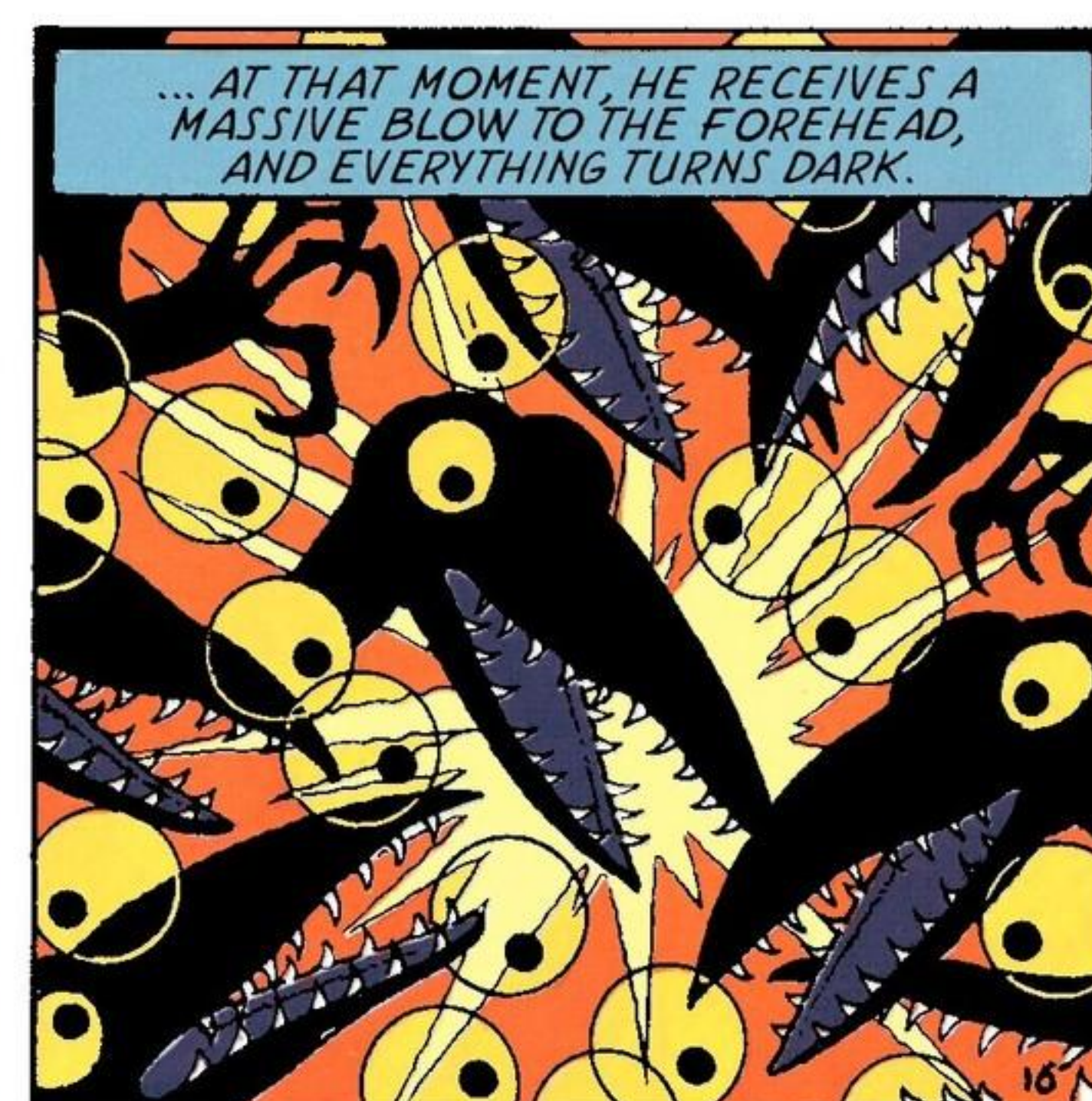
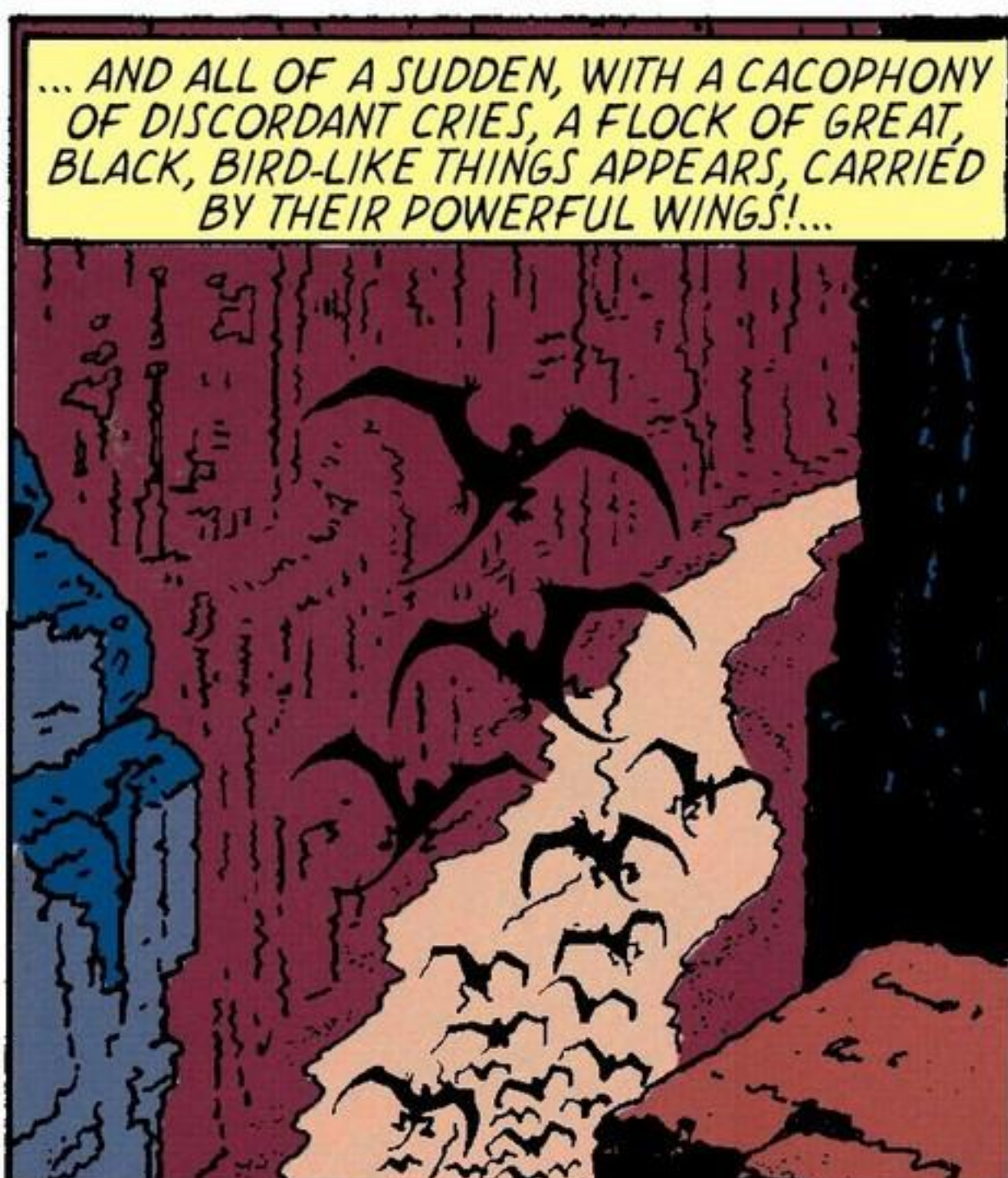
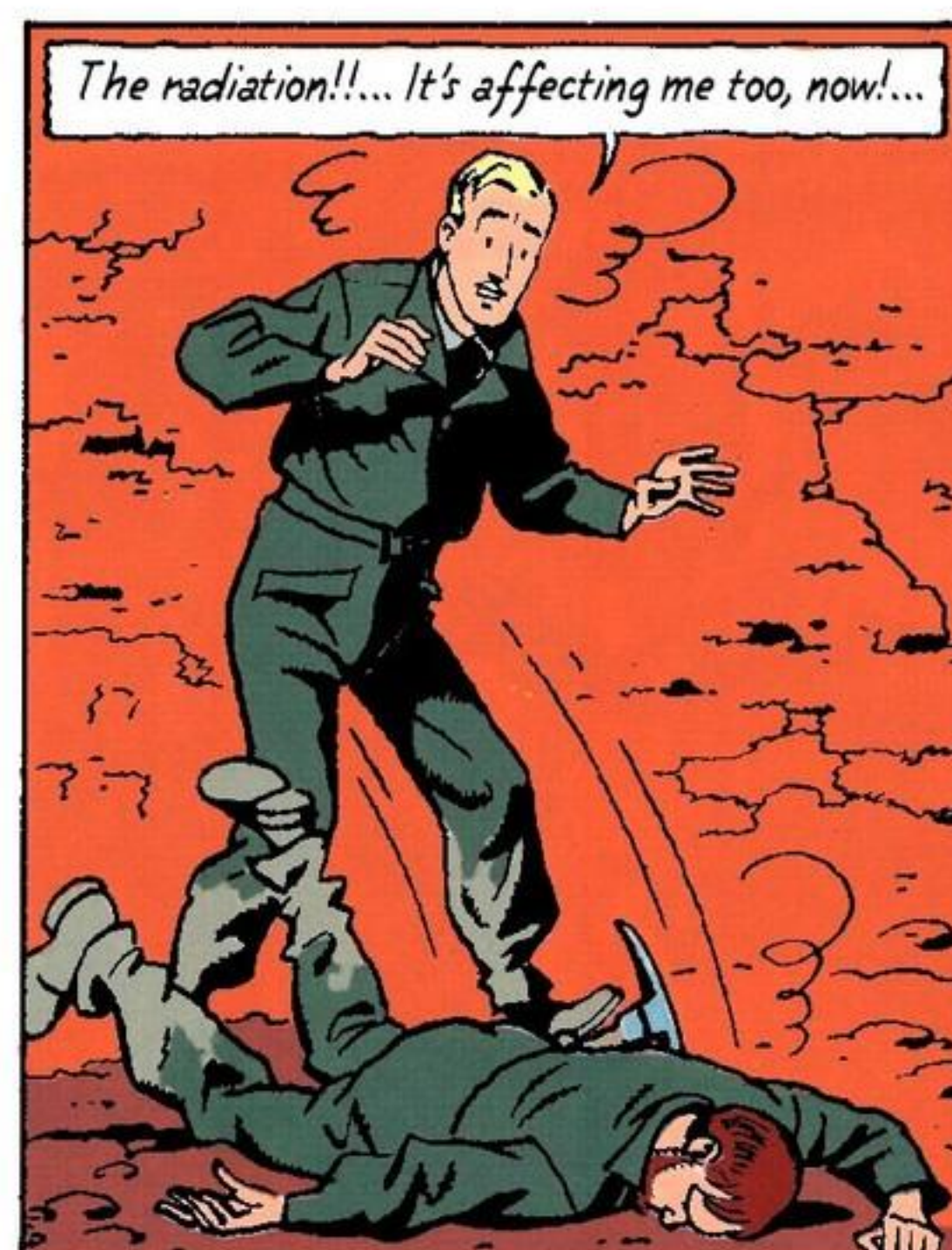
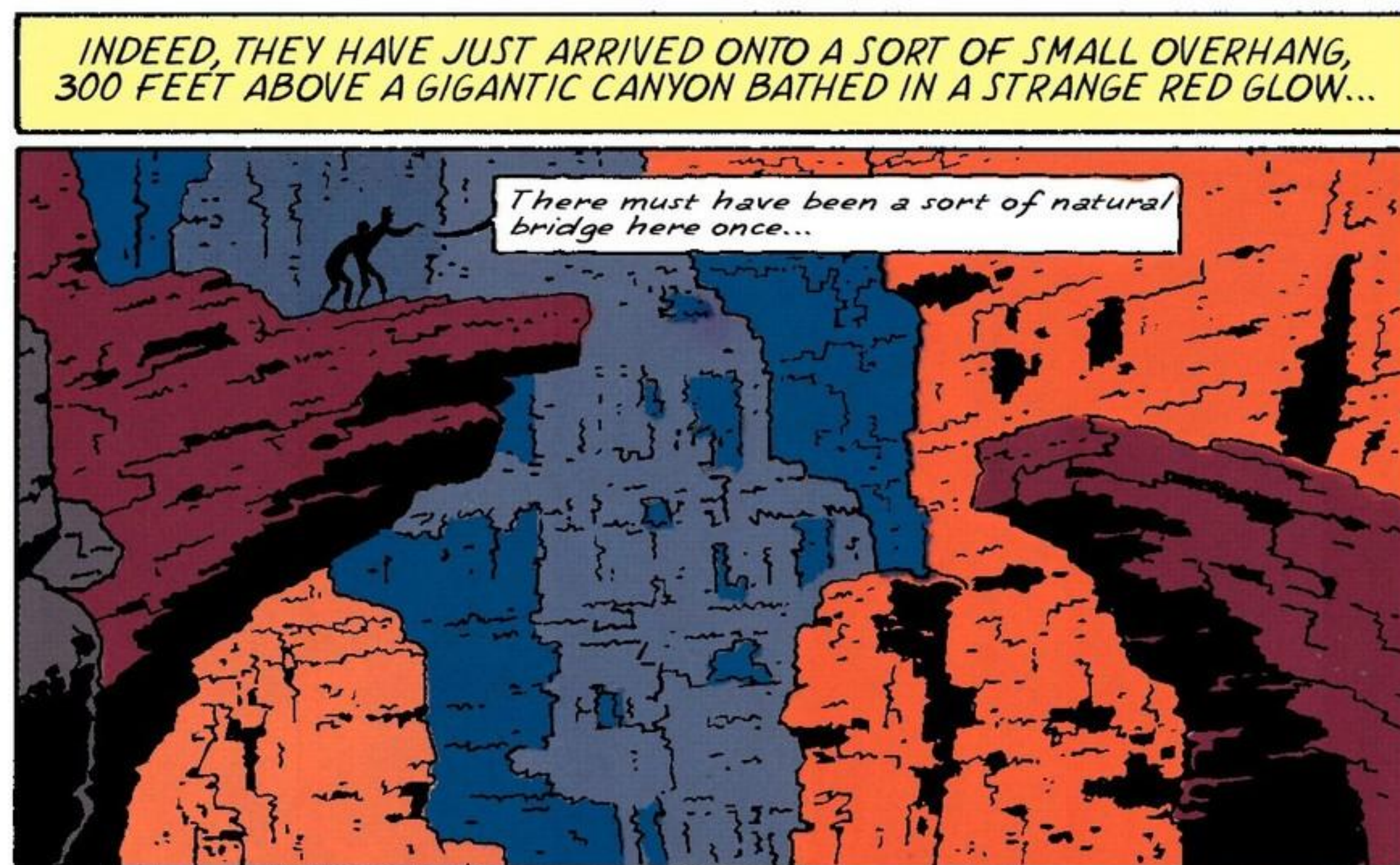
Heavens! What happened to him?!...

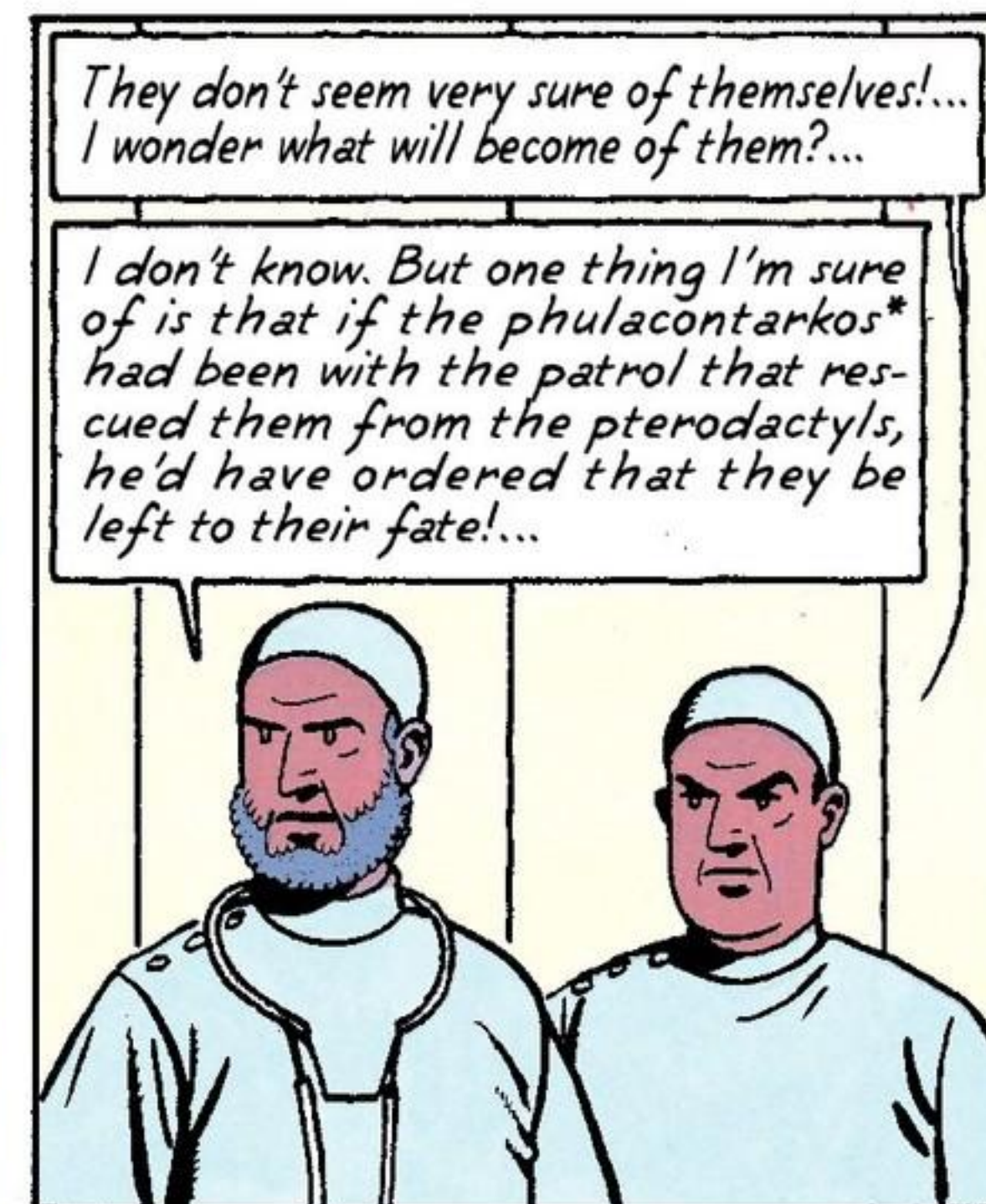
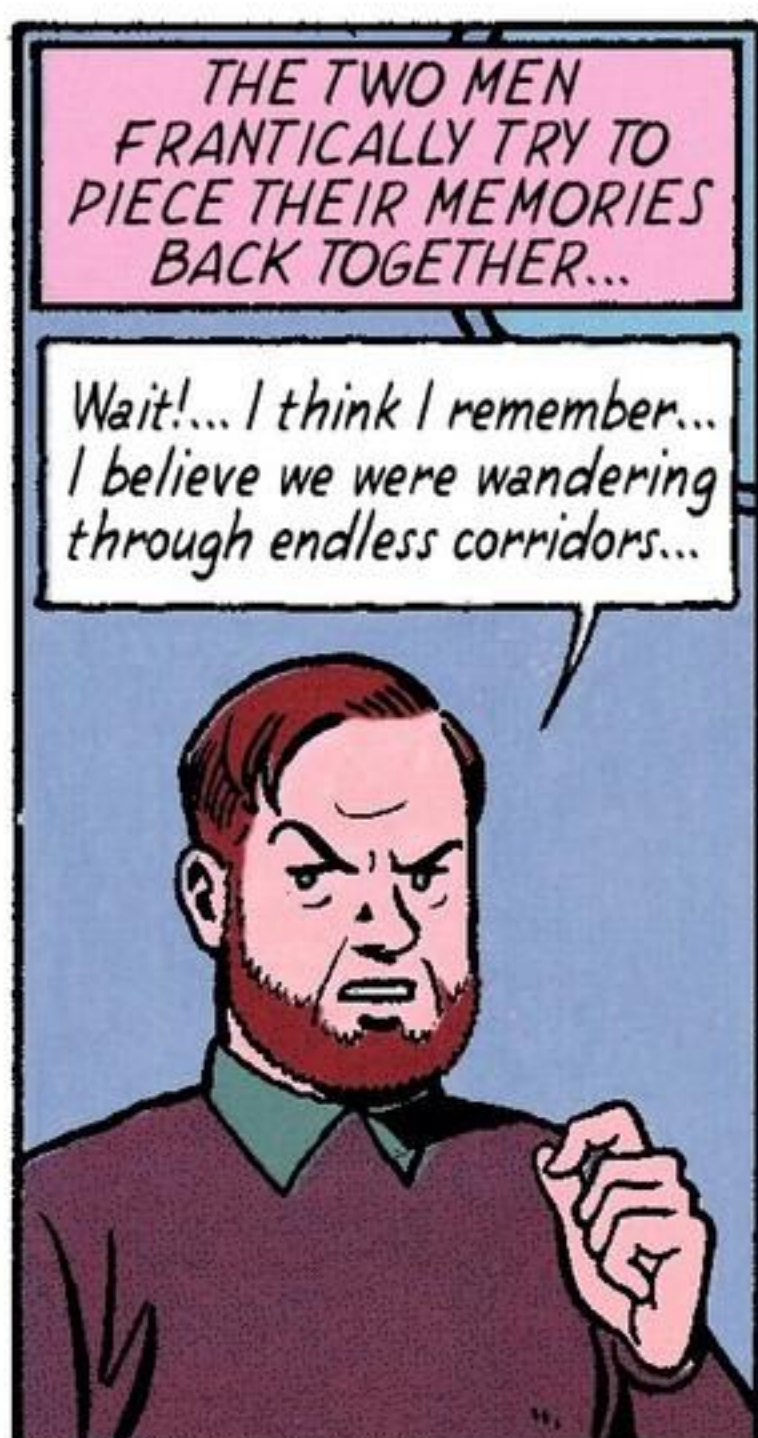
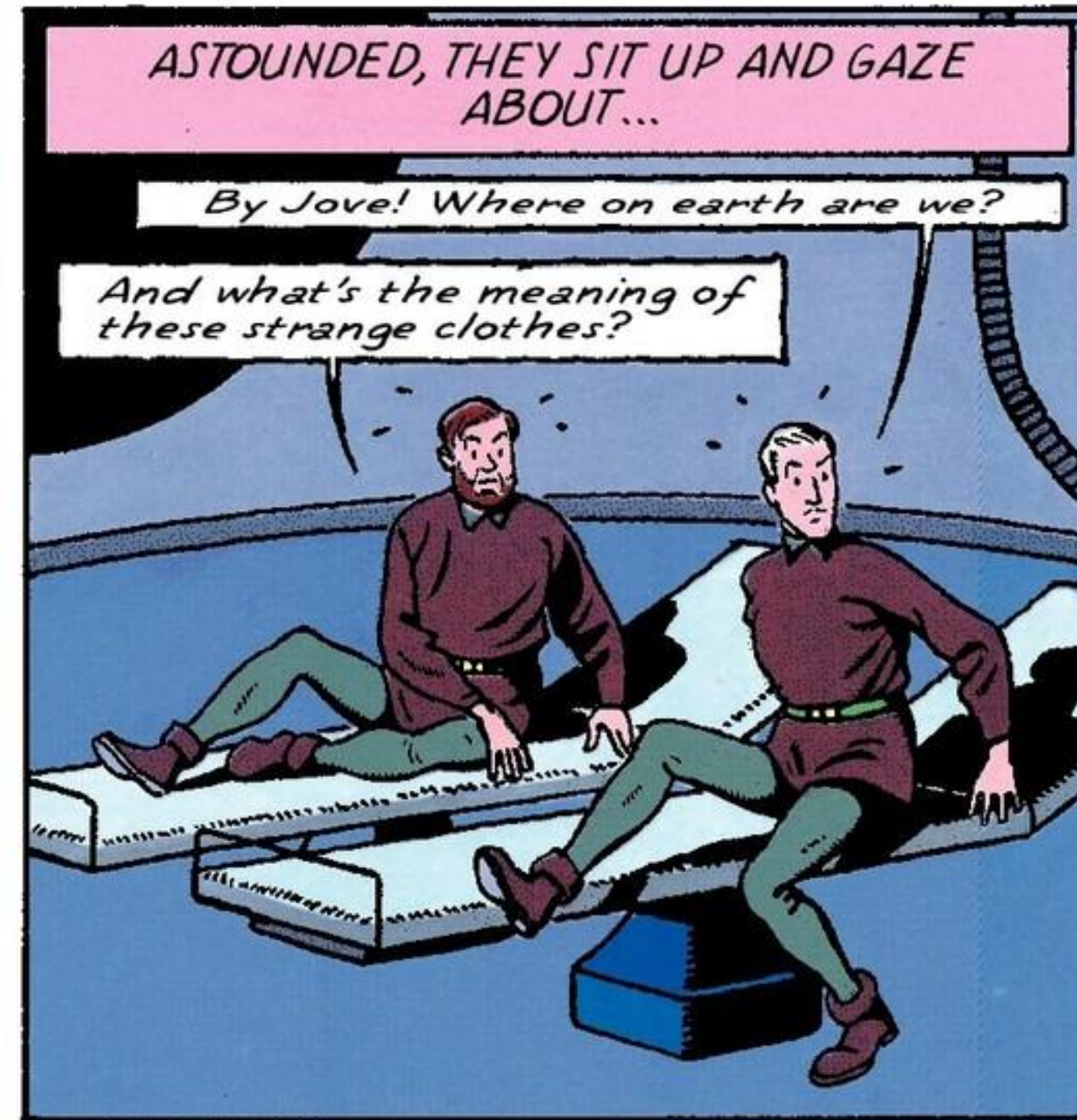
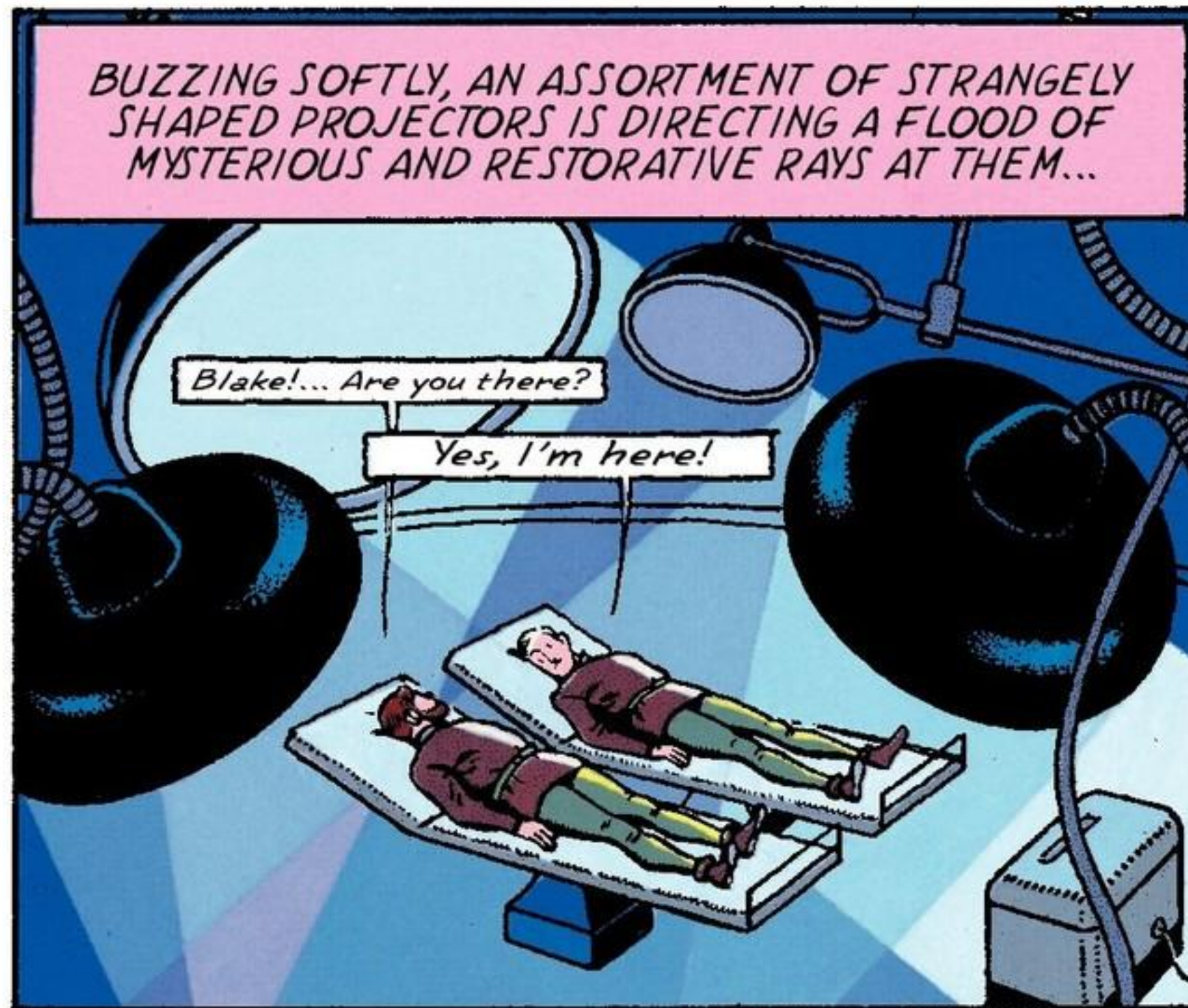




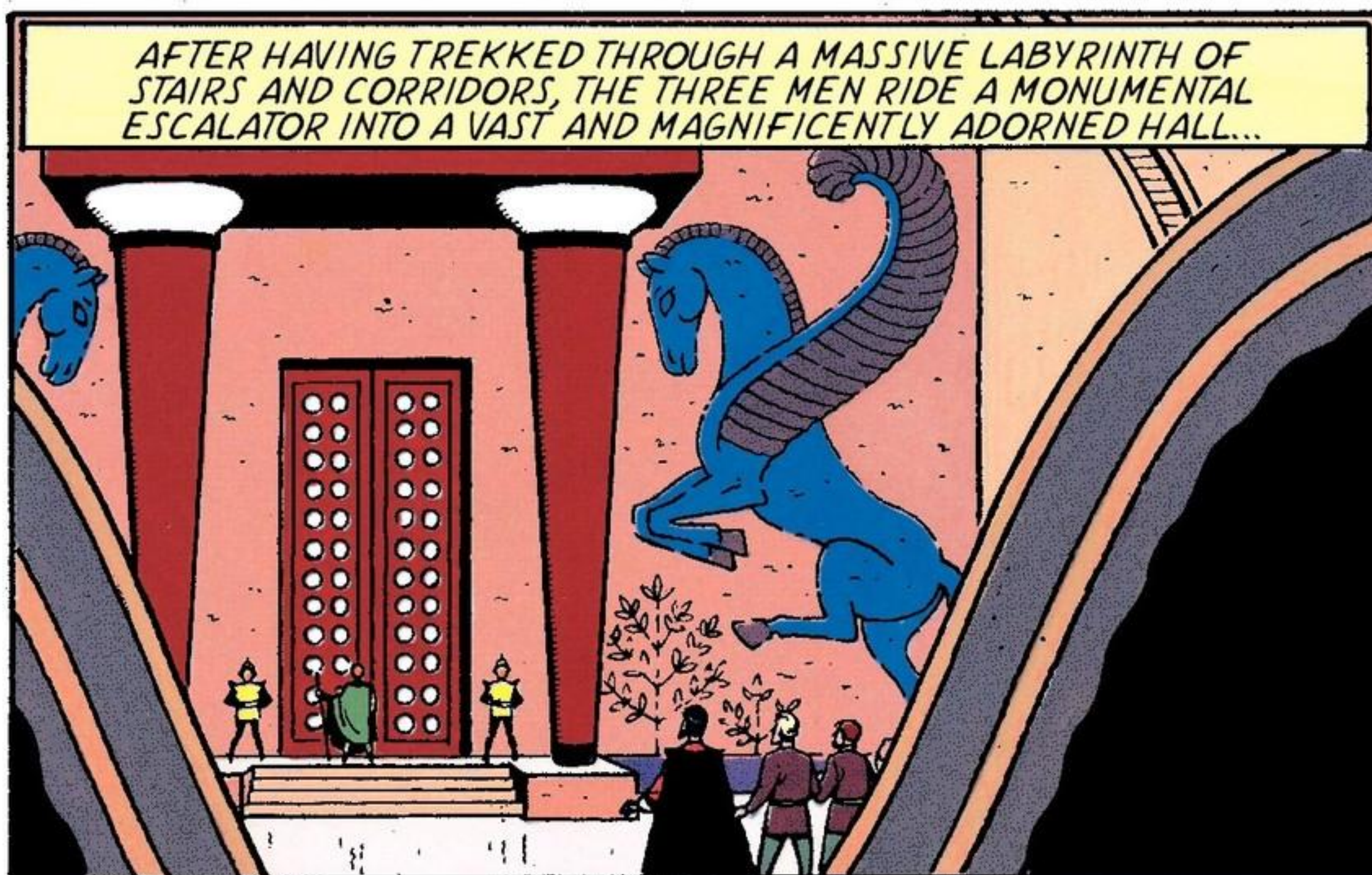


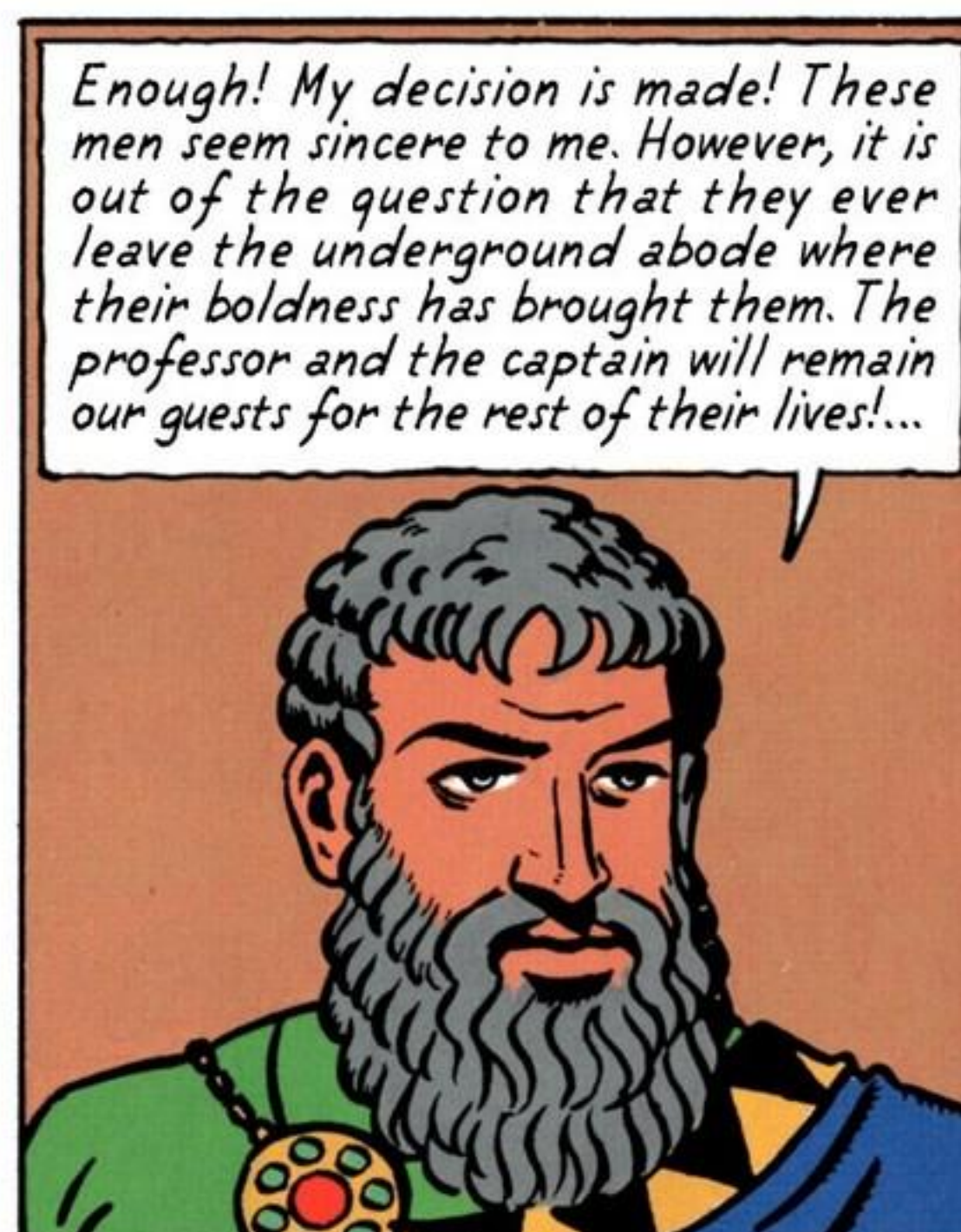
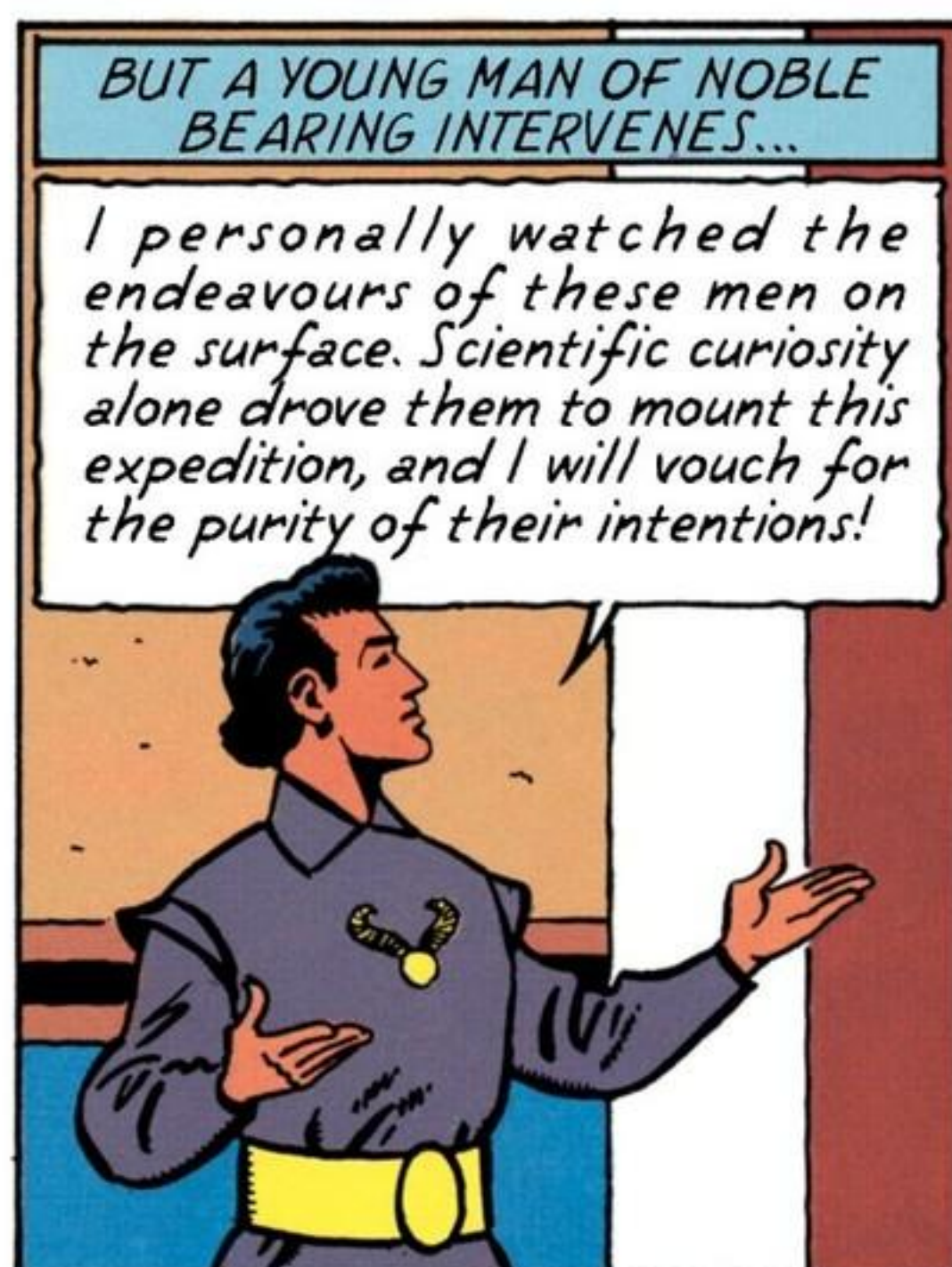
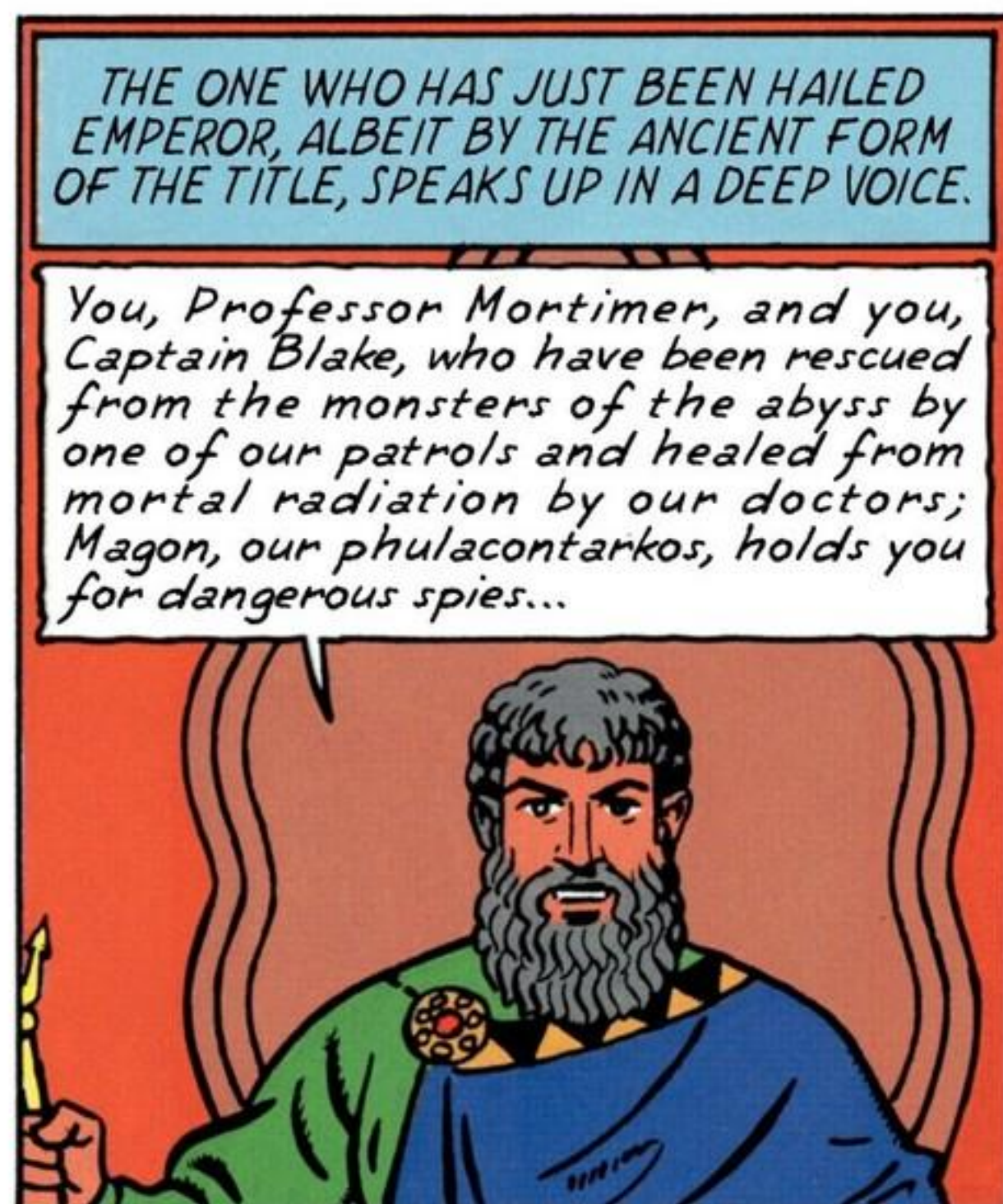


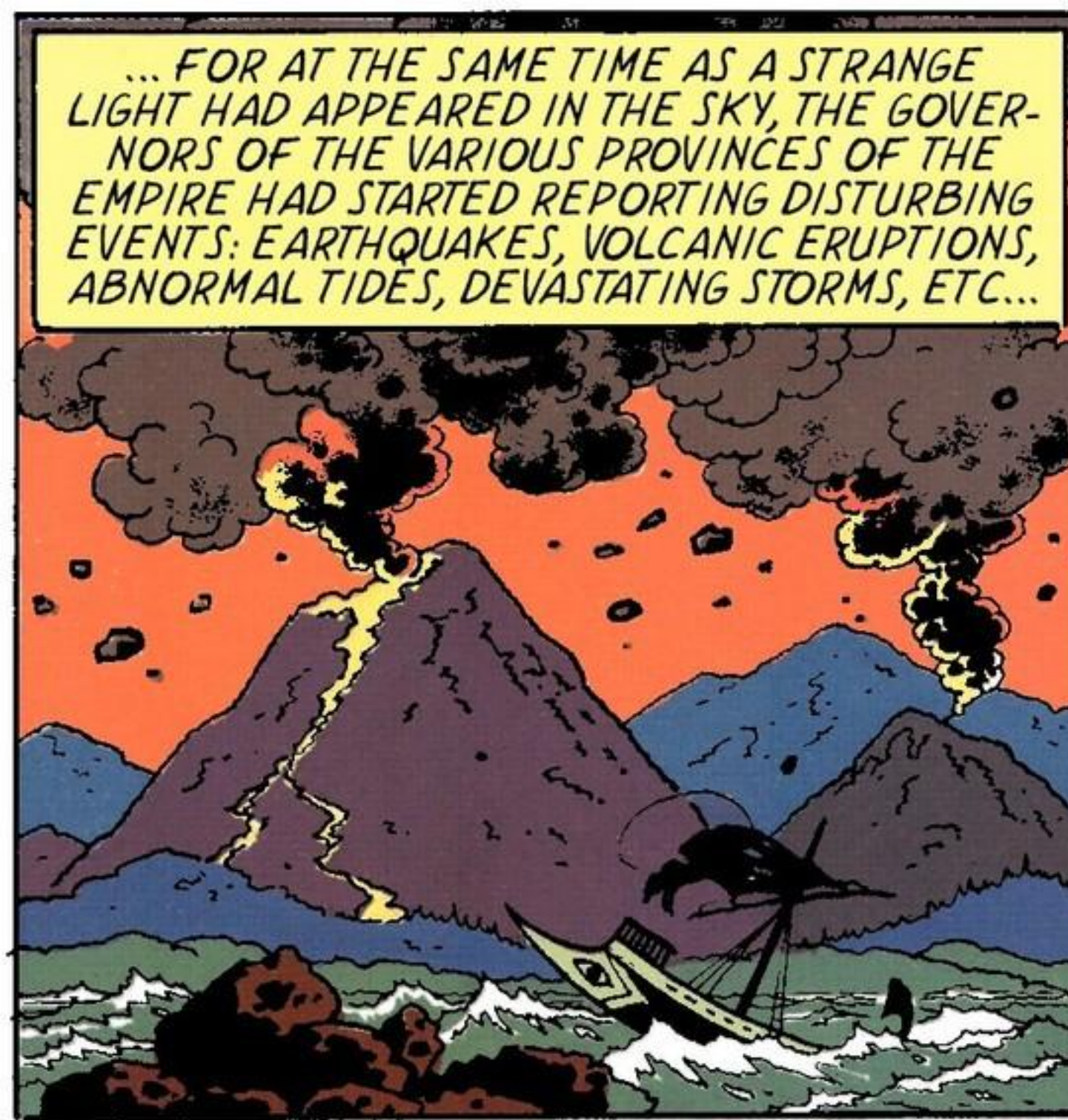
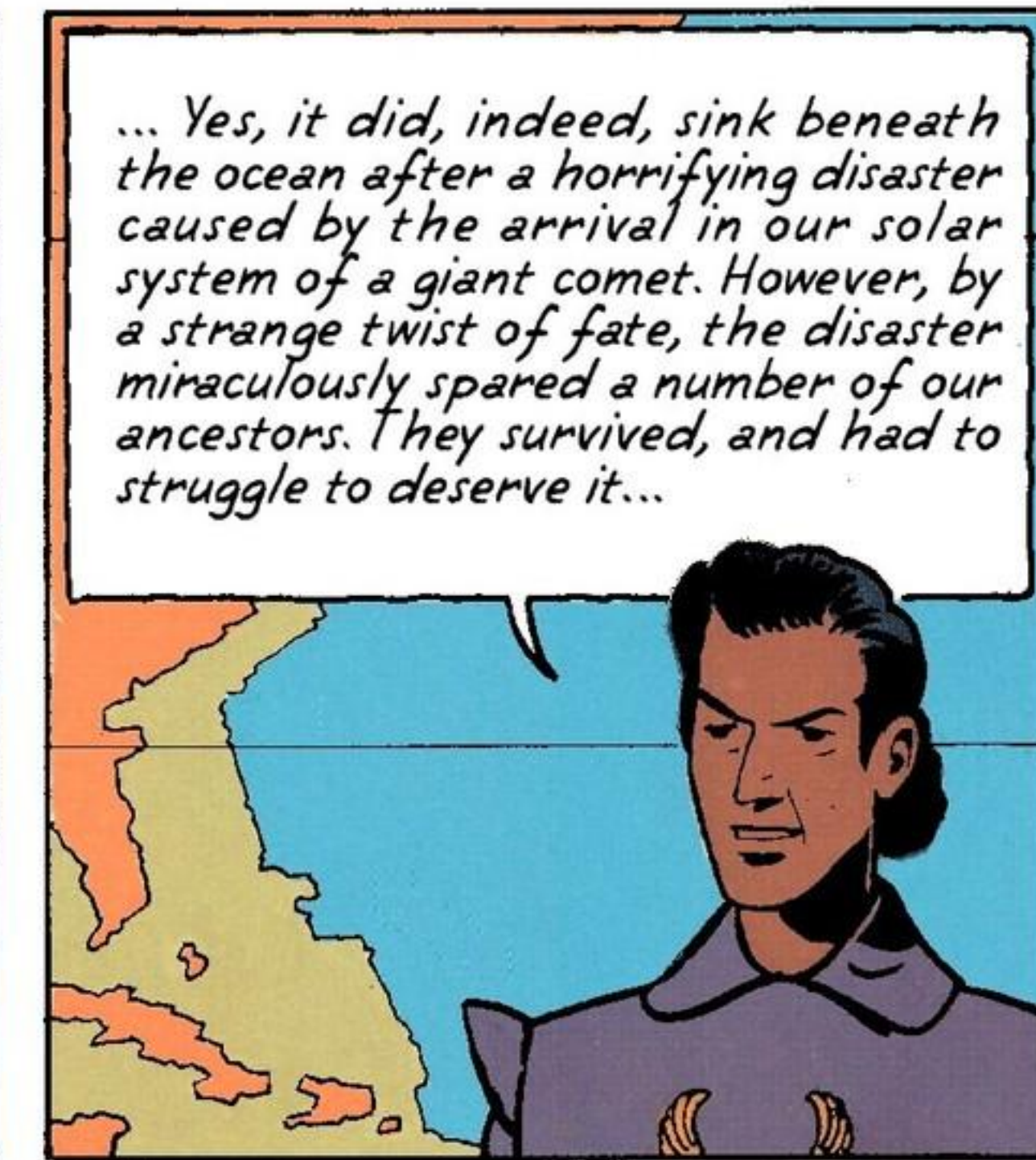
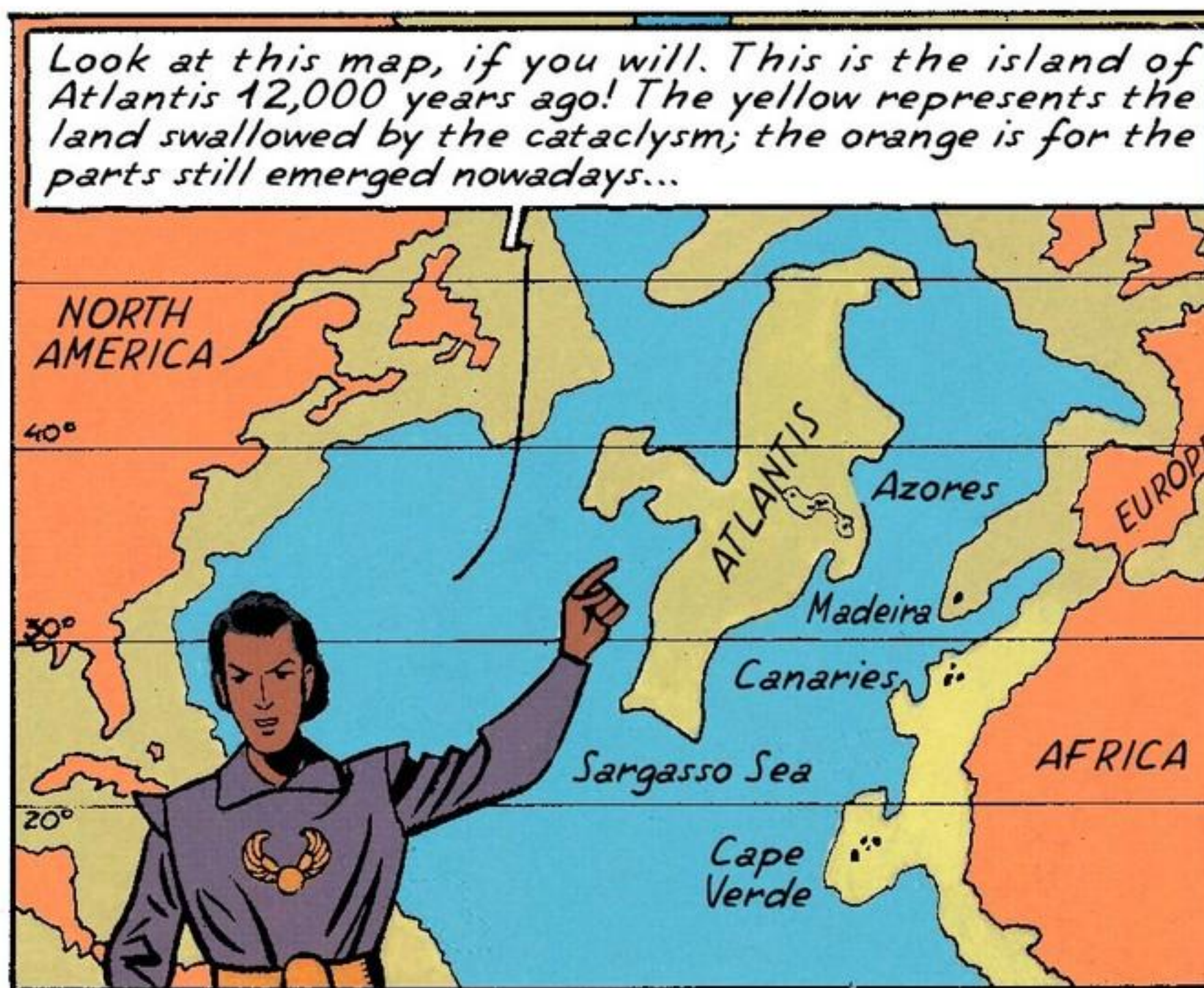
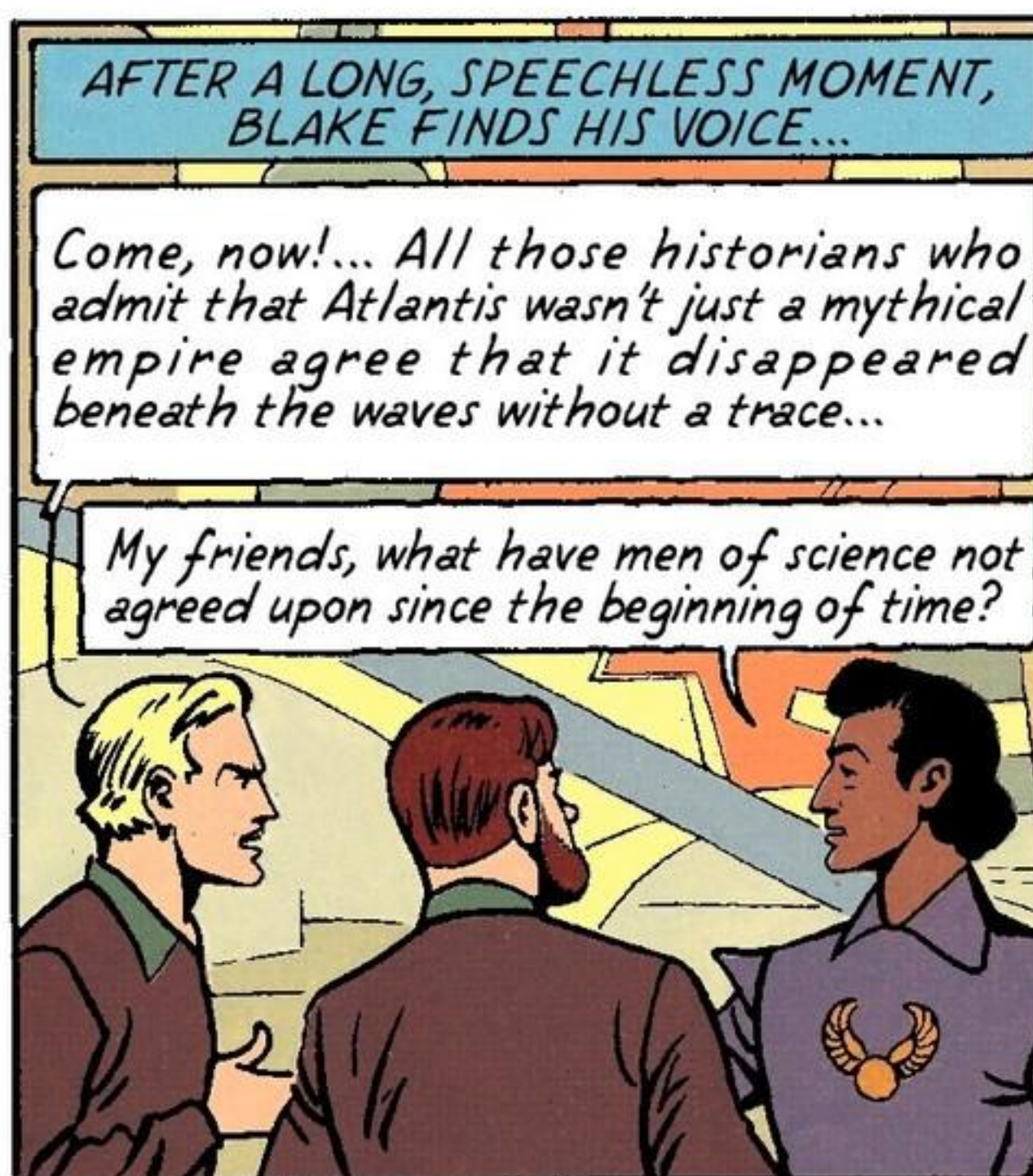
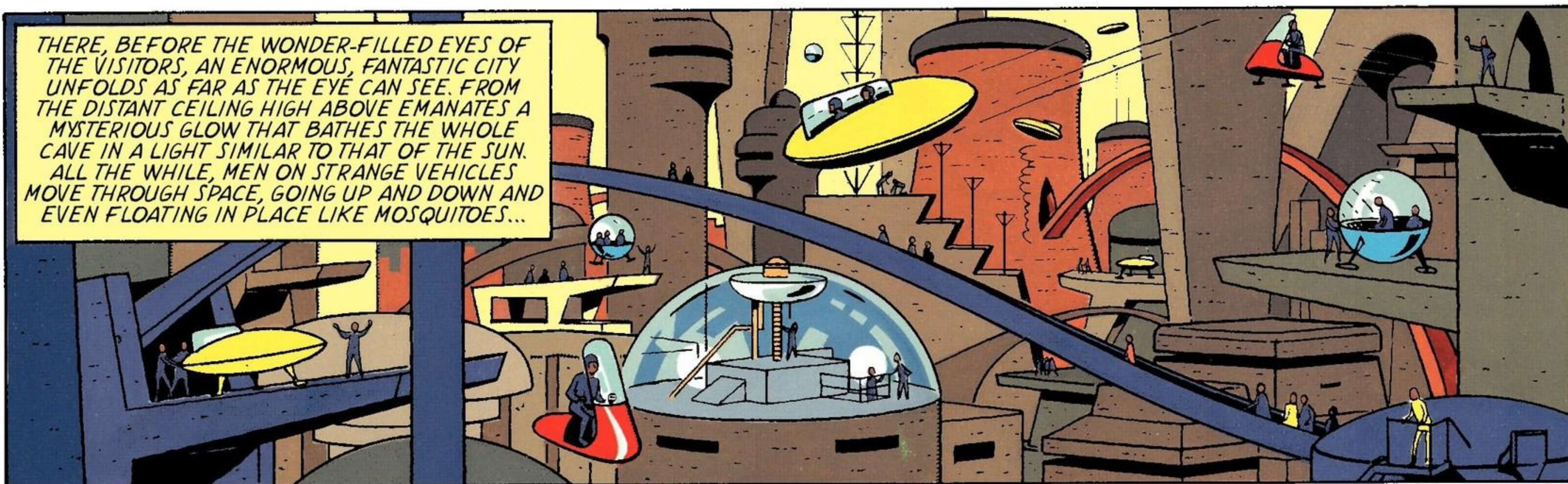
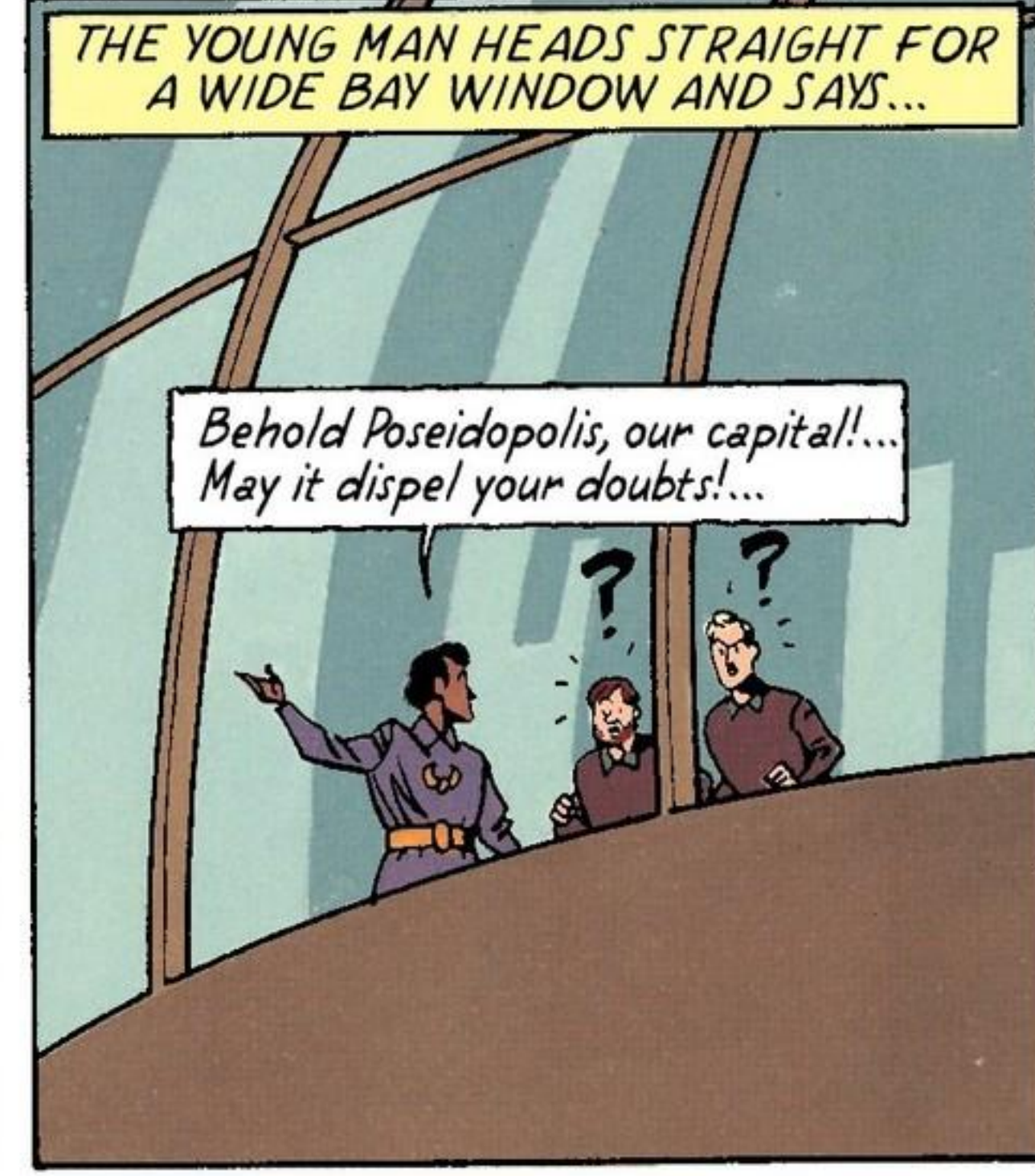
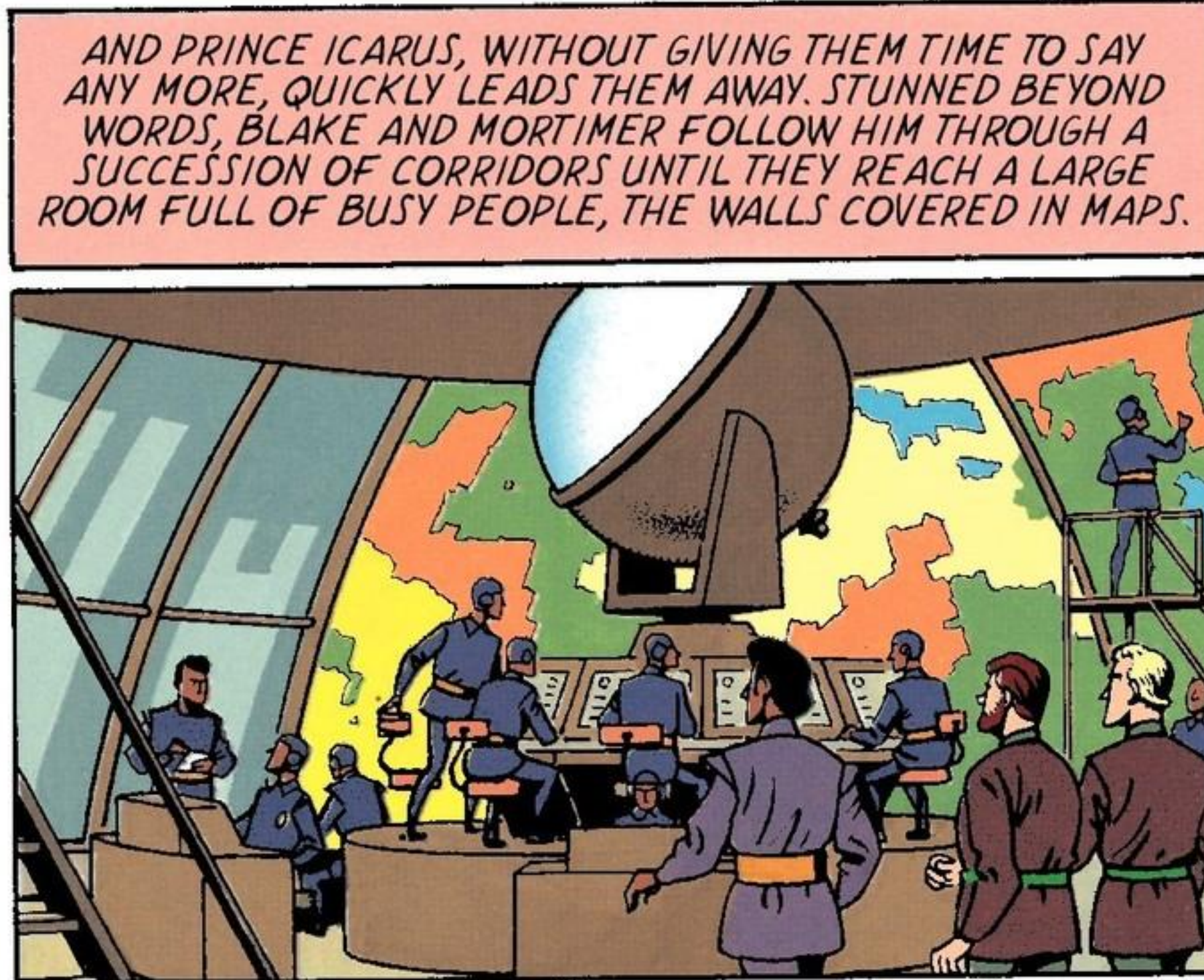
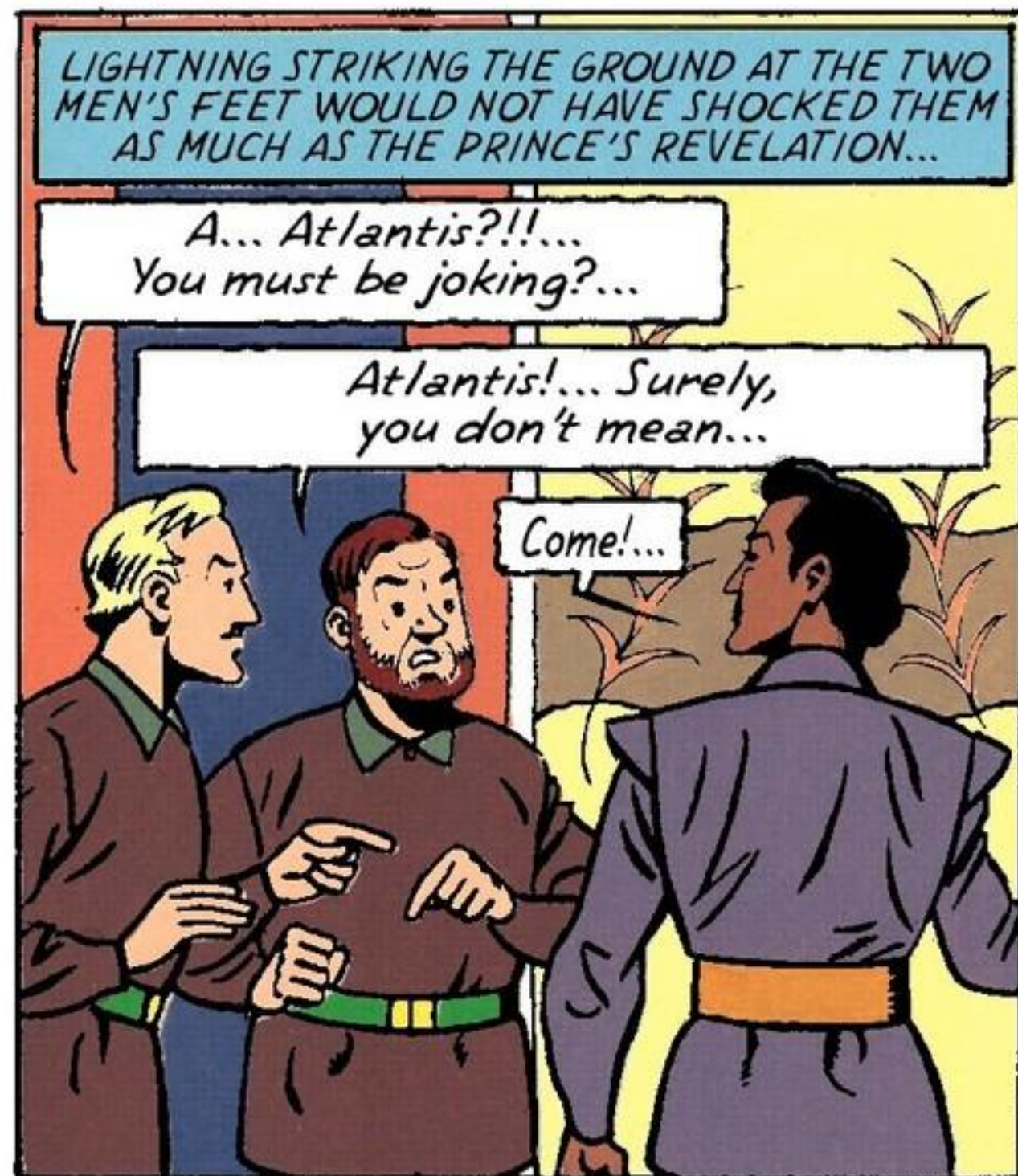




*CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD







THREE DAYS AFTER IT APPEARED, THE COMET HAD REACHED GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS. ITS BLINDINGLY BRIGHT TAIL SEEMED TO COVER HALF THE SKY. AND ON EARTH, THERE WERE MORE AND MORE DISASTERS!...



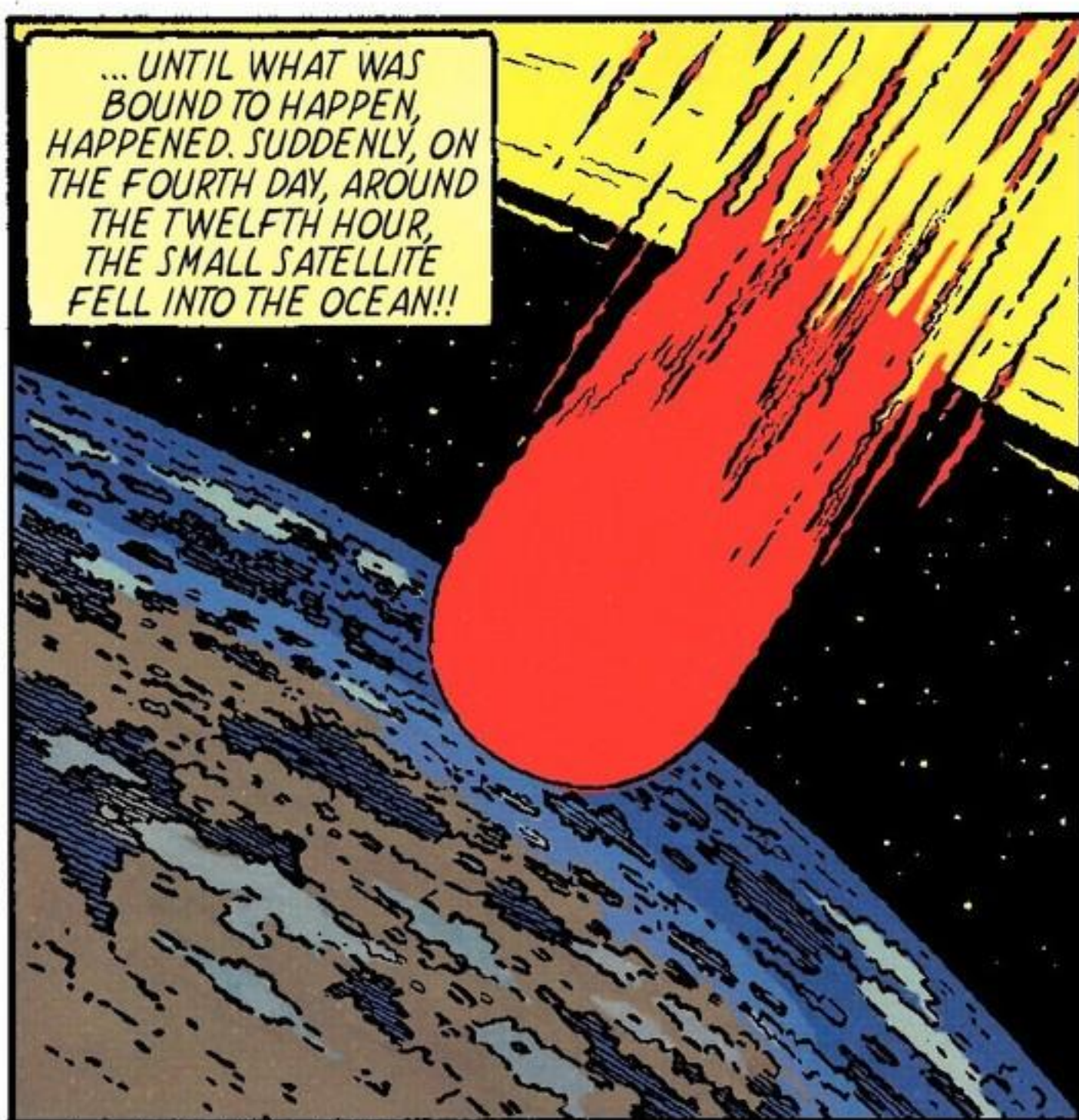
... EARTHQUAKE FOLLOWED EARTHQUAKE WITHOUT PAUSE. EVERY VOLCANO WAS SPEWING FIRE AT ONCE. TIDAL WAVES RAVAGED THE SHORELINES. ISLANDS EMERGED FROM THE OCEAN AND OTHERS VANISHED. THE PANIC THAT HAD GRIPPED THE PEOPLE NOW BORDERED ON MADNESS!... AND YET, THE TERRIBLE EFFECTS THAT THIS VISITOR FROM SPACE HAD WROUGHT UPON EARTH WERE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE UPHEAVALS IT HAD CAUSED WITHIN OUR PLANETARY SYSTEM...



FOR, BACK THEN, THE MOON WAS AN INDEPENDENT PLANET, AND A SMALLER SATELLITE ORBITED OUR WORLD. NOT ONLY DID THE GIANT COMET FORCE THE MOON INTO EARTH'S ATTRACTION, BUT IT ALSO CAUSED THE SMALLER SATELLITE'S ORBIT TO LOWER!...



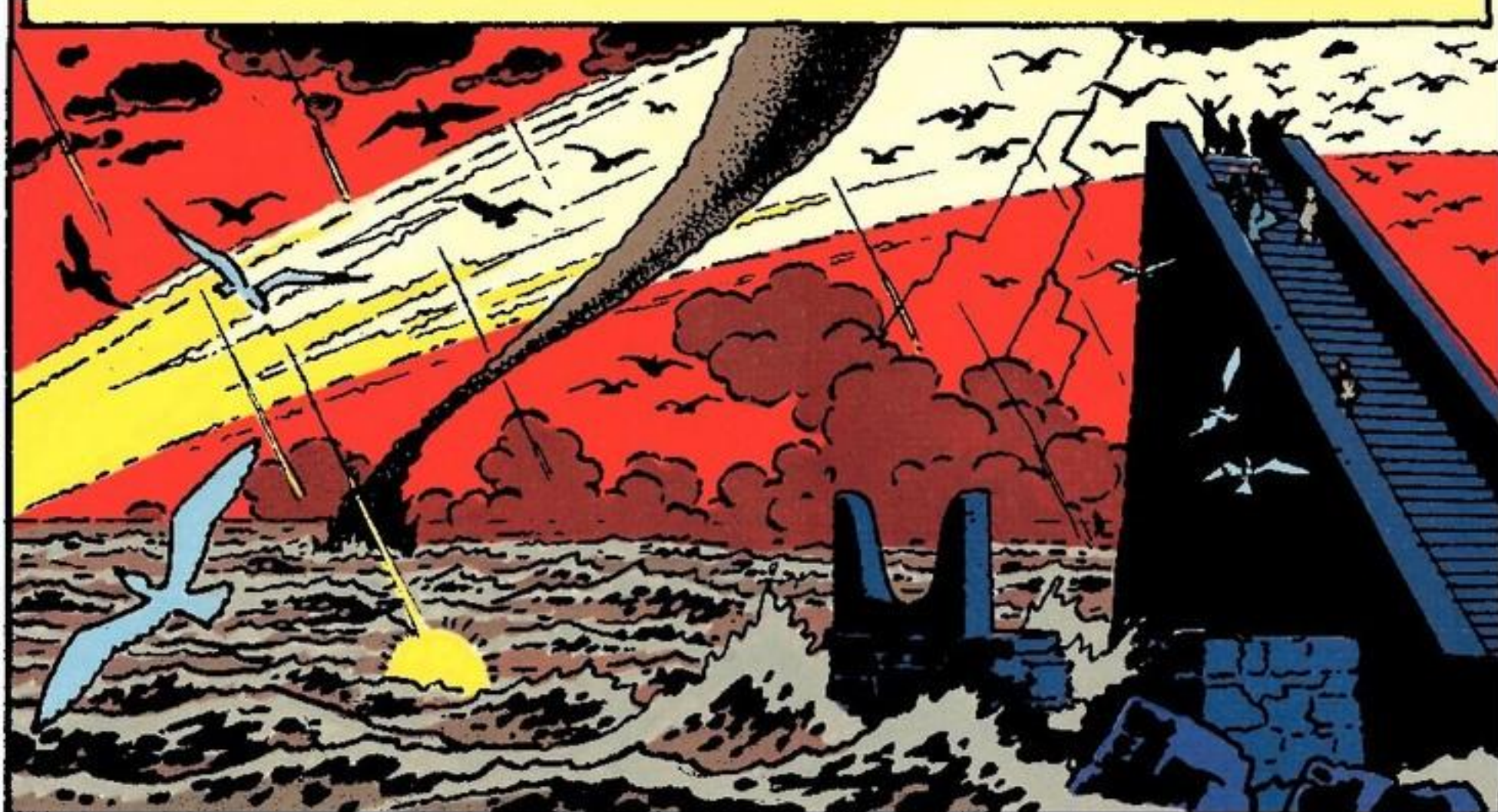
... UNTIL WHAT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN, HAPPENED. SUDDENLY, ON THE FOURTH DAY, AROUND THE TWELFTH HOUR, THE SMALL SATELLITE FELL INTO THE OCEAN!!



... THE SHOCK MADE THE EARTH WOBBLE. ENTIRE ISLANDS AND WHOLE CHUNKS OF CONTINENTS DISAPPEARED. A MONSTROUS WAVE WENT AROUND THE GLOBE SEVERAL TIMES, SWEEPING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH!... FROM THE HEIGHT OF THEIR OBSERVATORY, THE HANDFUL OF TERRIFIED SCIENTISTS AND THEIR FAMILIES COULD ONLY WATCH IN HORROR AS POSEIDOPOLIS, THE SUPERB CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE, WAS WIPE OUT, ALONG WITH THE PRESTIGIOUS ATLANTEAN CIVILISATION!...



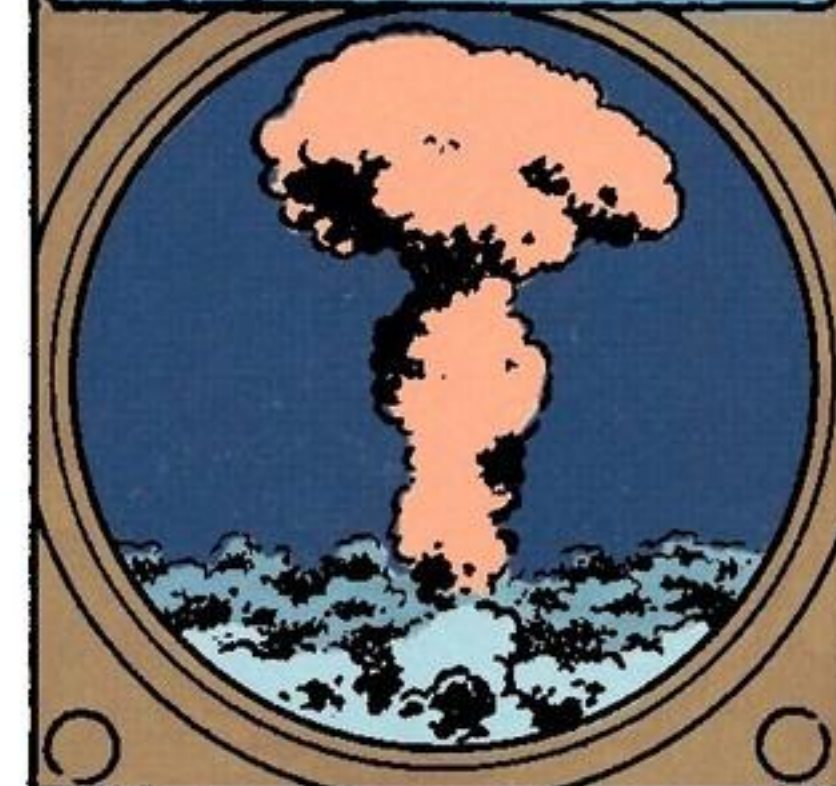
IT WAS ONLY LATER THAT THE SURVIVORS, AS THEY GAZED AT THE VAST, MUDDY SEA THAT LAY WHERE THE CAPITAL HAD BEEN AND THE WAVES THAT WERE NOW BATTERING THE CRUMBLING WALLS OF THEIR REFUGE, FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE FULL SCALE AND MEANING OF THE CATASTROPHE...



... THESE PROUD MEN, WHO HAD RULED OVER THE WORLD, COULD NOT ACCEPT THEIR FALL. RATHER THAN REQUEST ASYLUM FROM THEIR FORMER VASSALS, THEY DECIDED TO HEAD DOWN INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH, THERE TO FOUND A NEW EMPIRE, ONE BASED IN KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.



AND SO, AFTER MILLENNIA SPENT PURSUING PROGRESS AND ADVANCEMENT, THE ATLANTEANS HAVE REACHED THEIR CURRENT LEVEL OF GREATNESS. AND ALL THE WHILE, THEY HAVE OBSERVED, FROM DEEP INSIDE THEIR UNDERGROUND HAVEN, AS MANKIND WENT CEASELESSLY FROM WAR TO REVOLUTION.



I must confess that since you've succeeded, like us, in releasing the energy of the atom, our people are rather worried. For we know what you are ready to use it for!!!...



AT THESE WORDS, MORTIMER, WHOSE FERTILE IMAGINATION HAD BEEN RECREATING IN HIS MIND ALL THE PRODIGIOUS IMAGES OF ICARUS'S STORY, STUMBLES BACK INTO THE PRESENT AND REALITY.

Indeed! And on that subject, will you explain the mystery of radioactive orichalcum?... For I assume that it is a metal, is it not?

Exactly! In ancient times, we used it to make our weapons, our jewellery, and many other things. It suddenly acquired these strange properties as it came into contact with our small satellite when it fell from the sky.

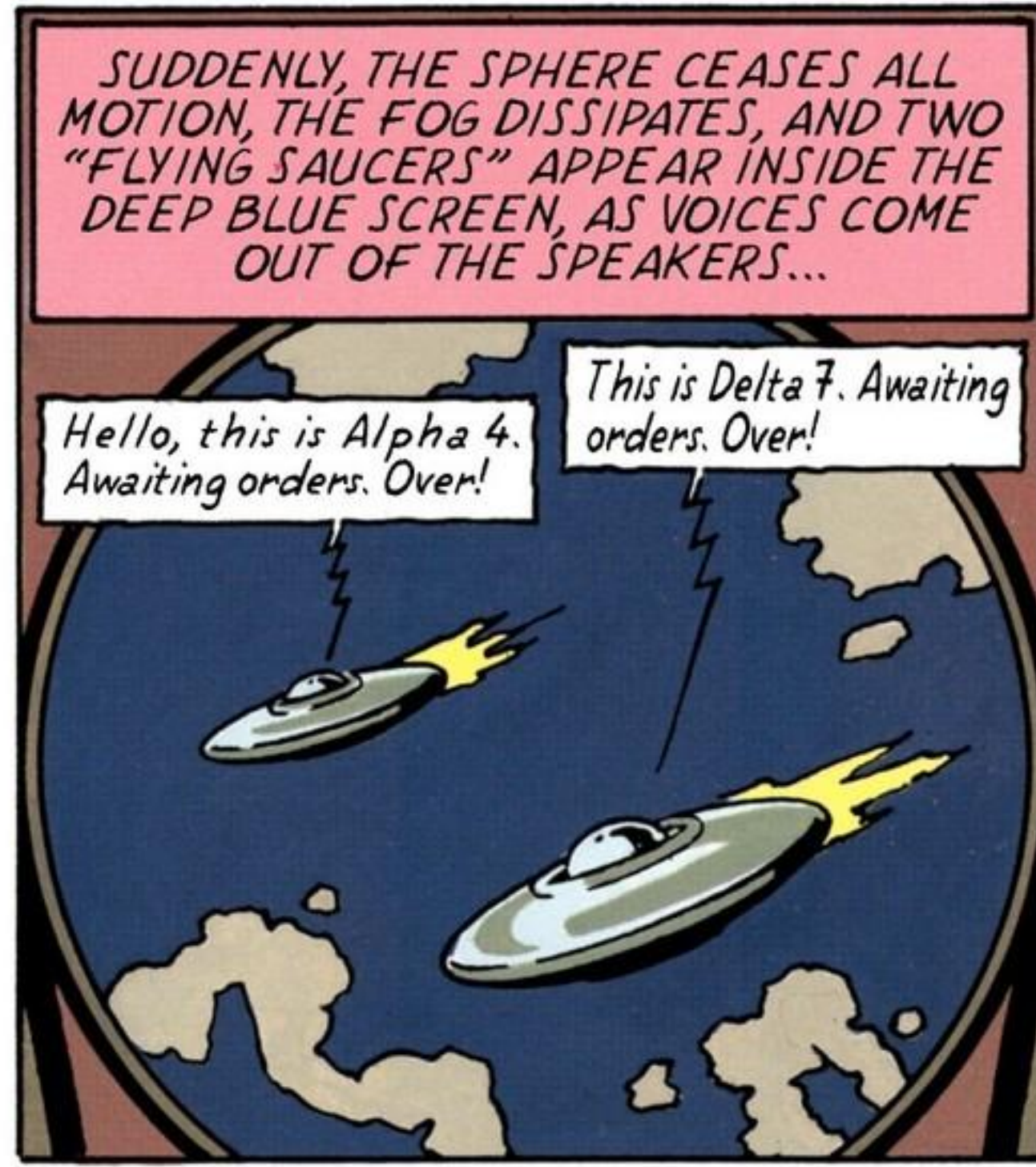


... Now, it's become for us an inexhaustible source of energy. Energy that powers, among other things, the crafts we use to explore interplanetary space and, more importantly, to keep an eye on the activities of men. Those crafts are what you call...



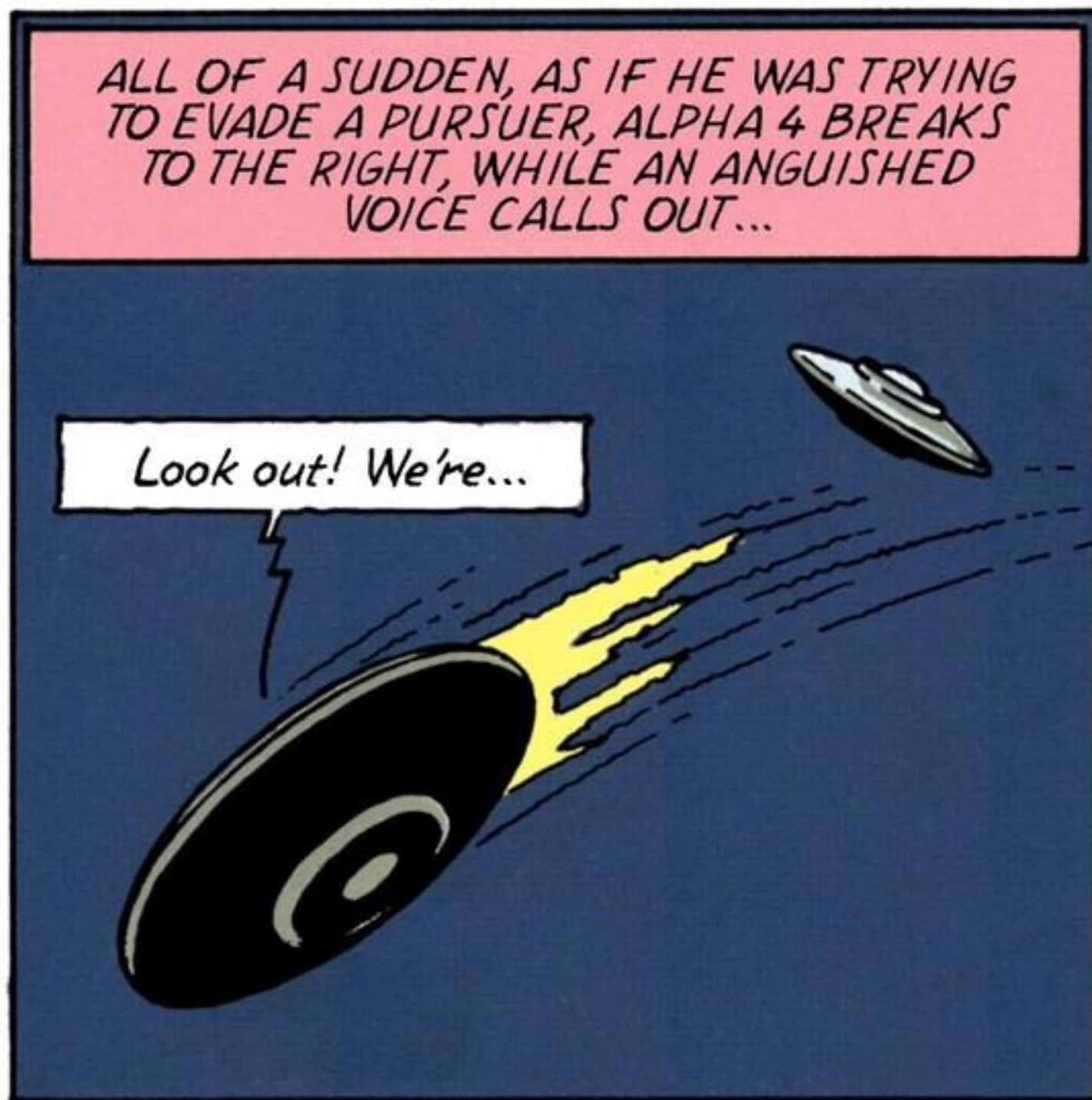
... FLYING SAUCERS!?!?...

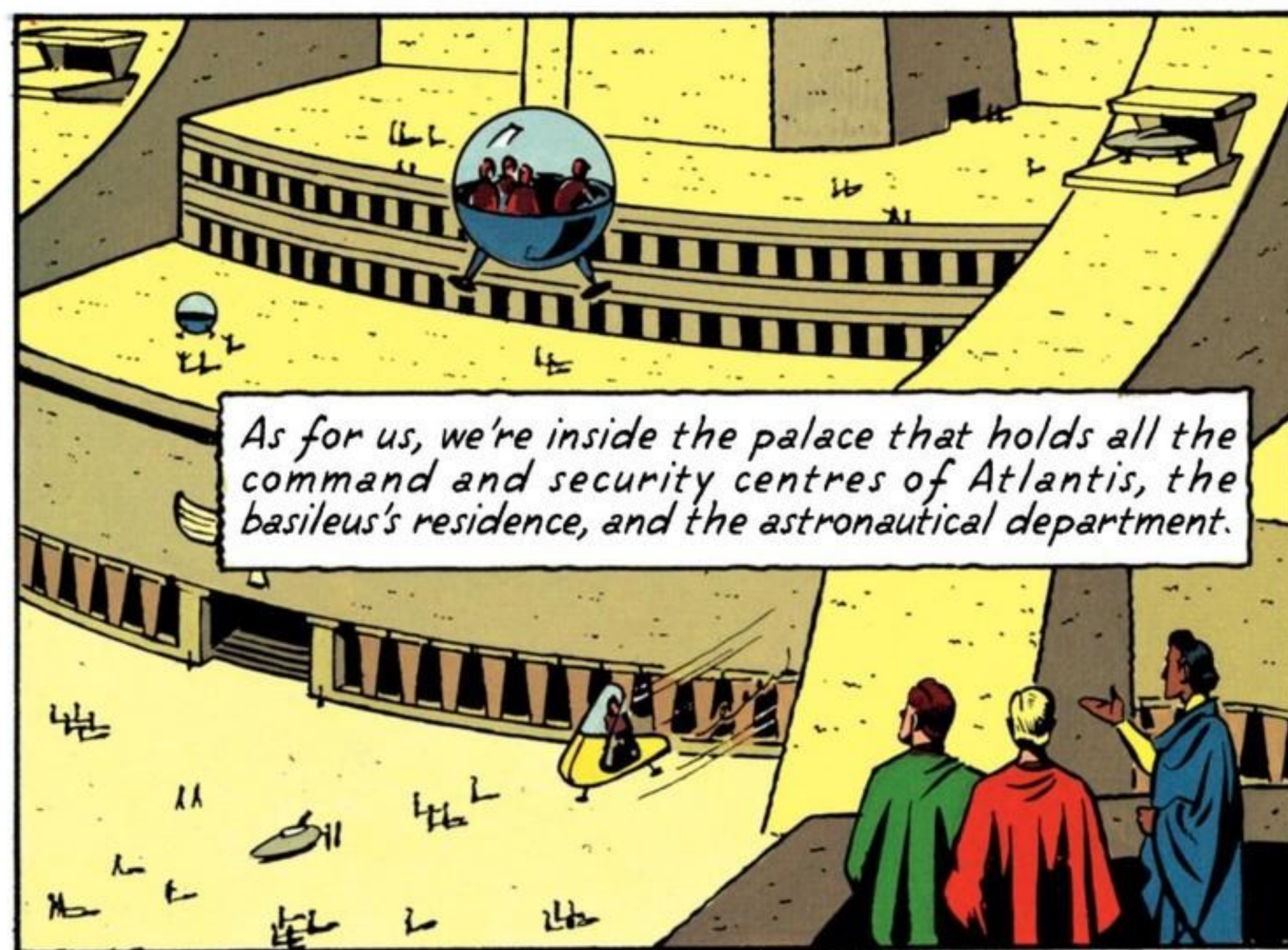
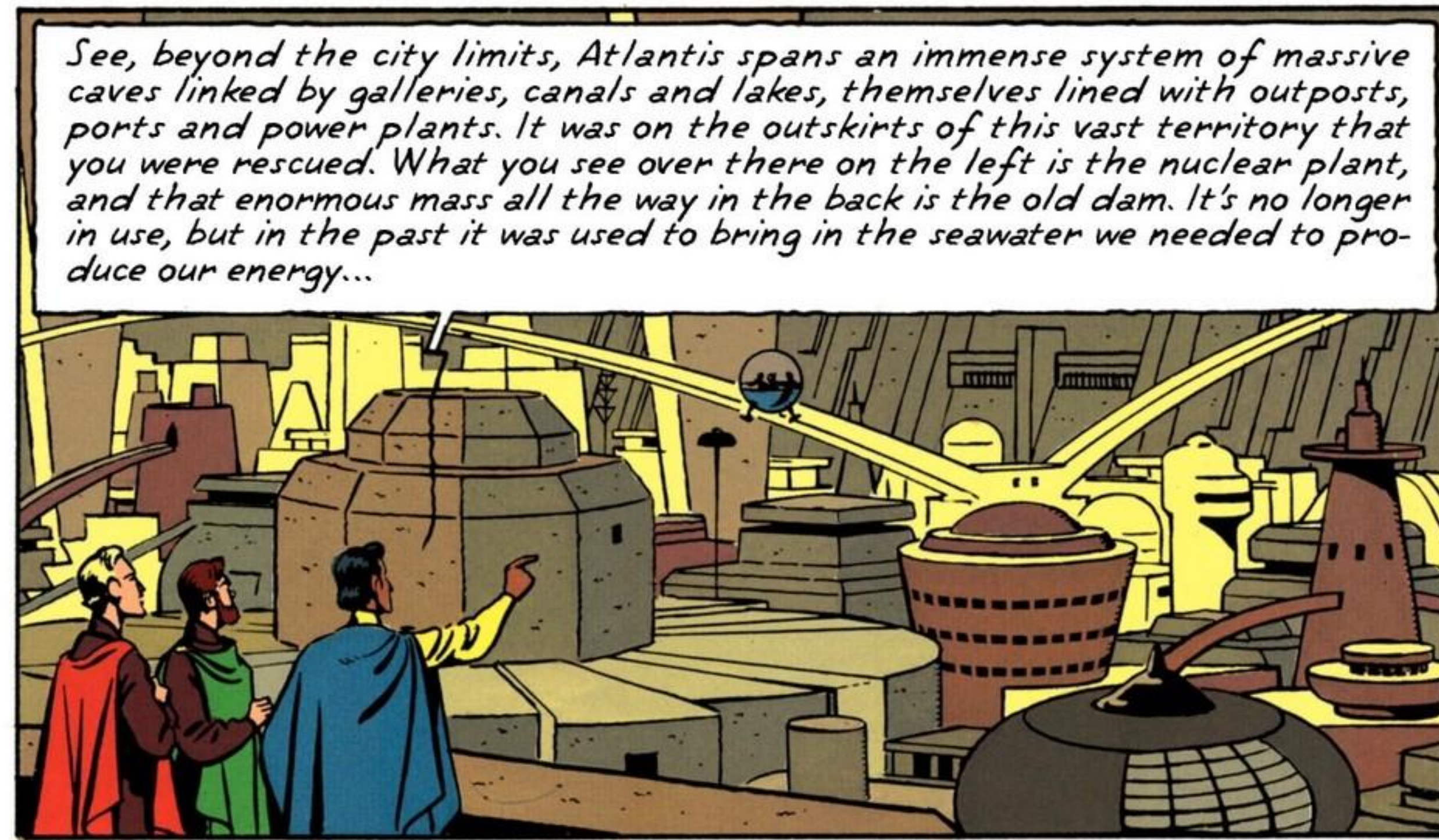
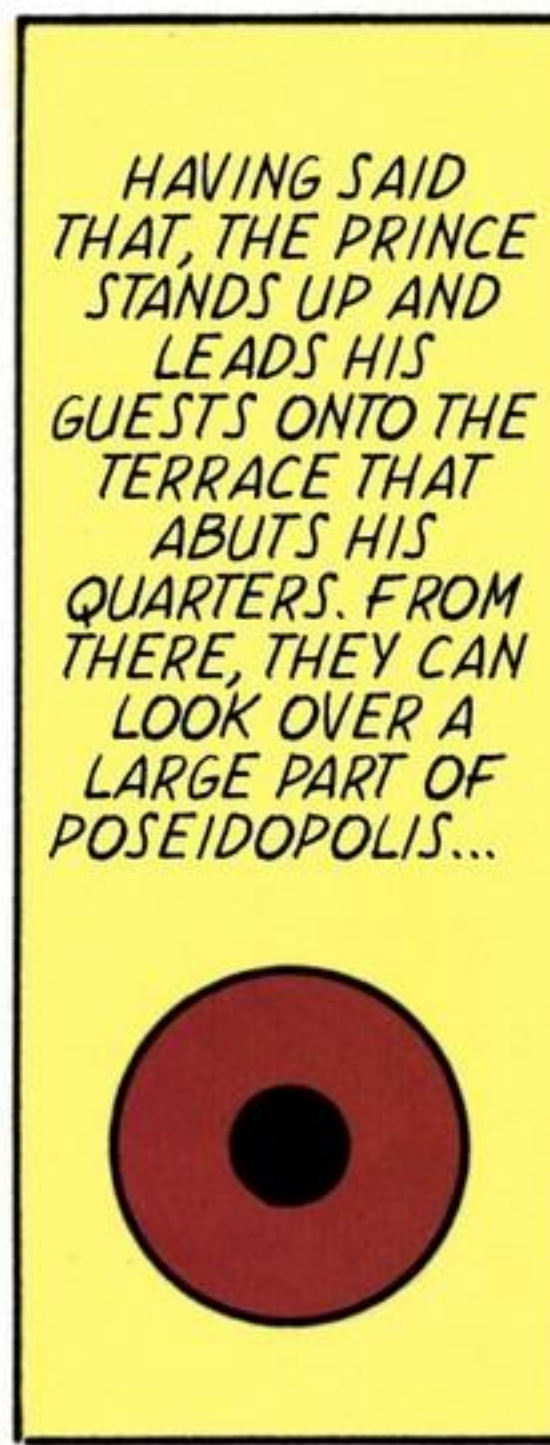
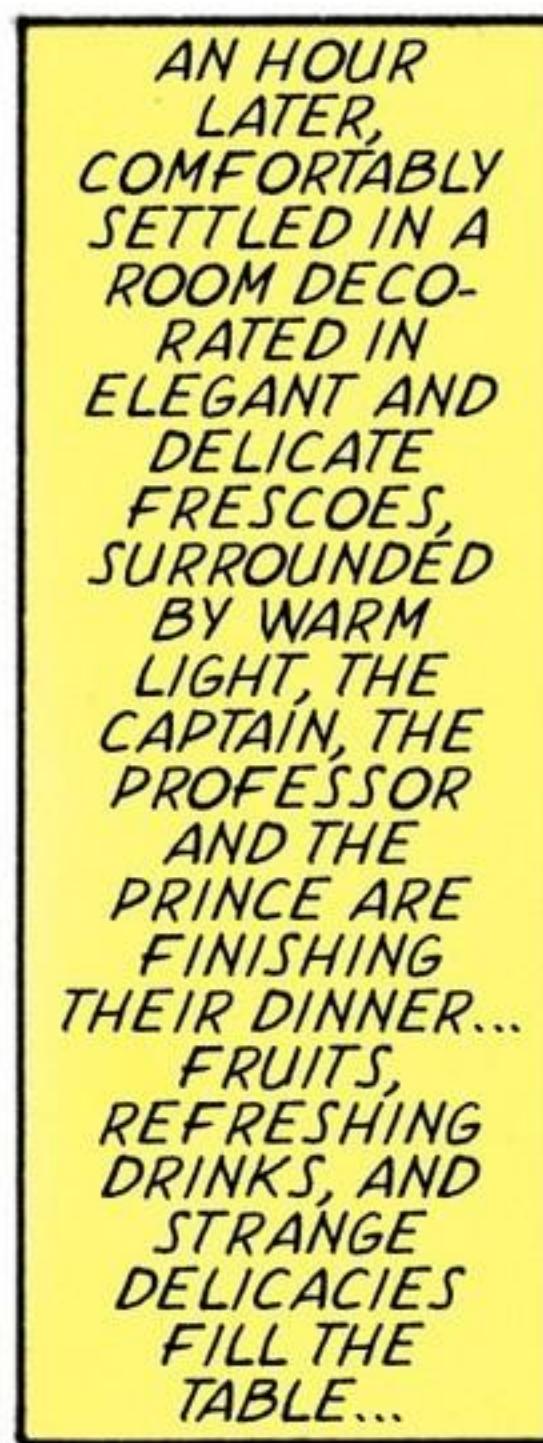


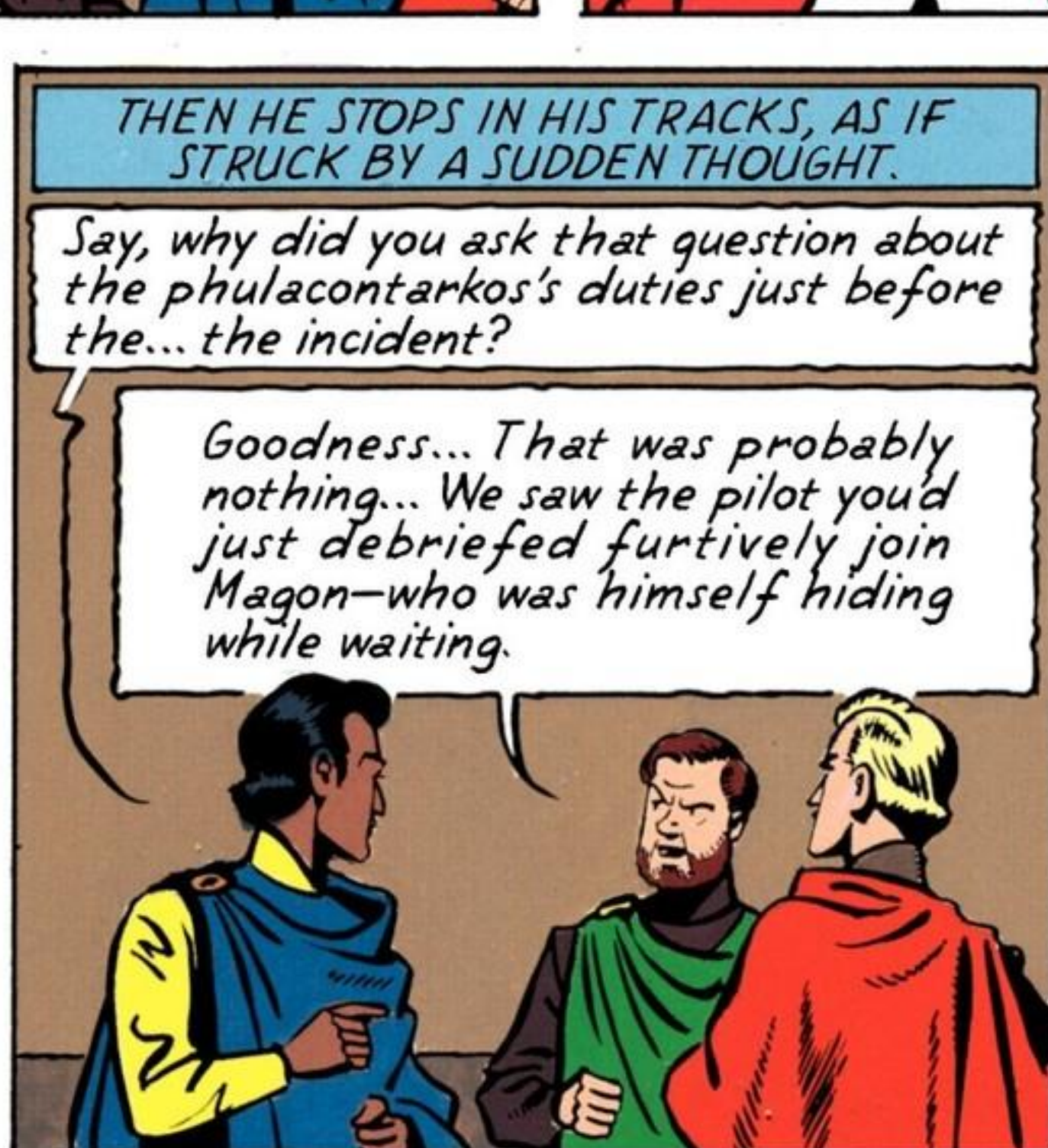
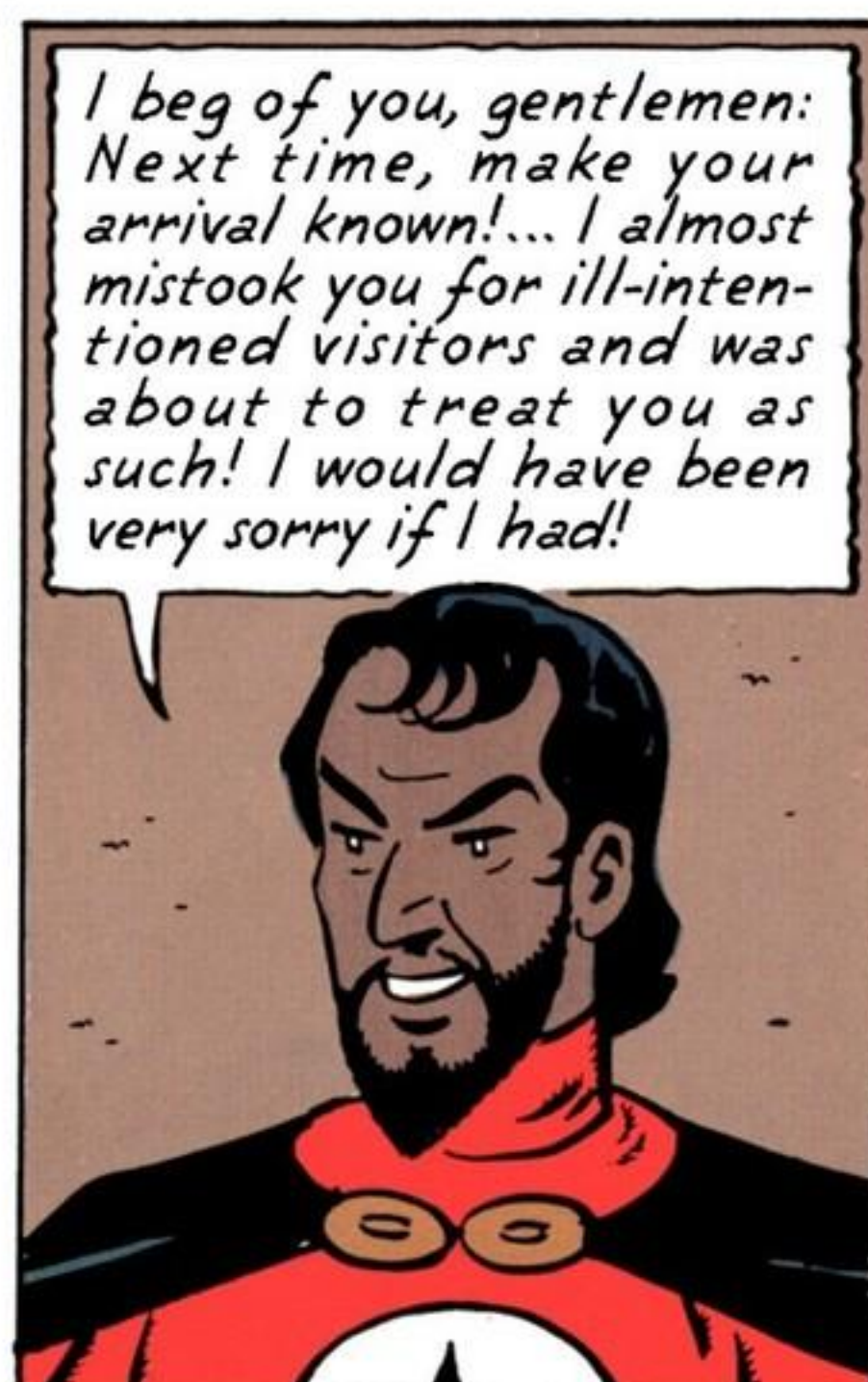
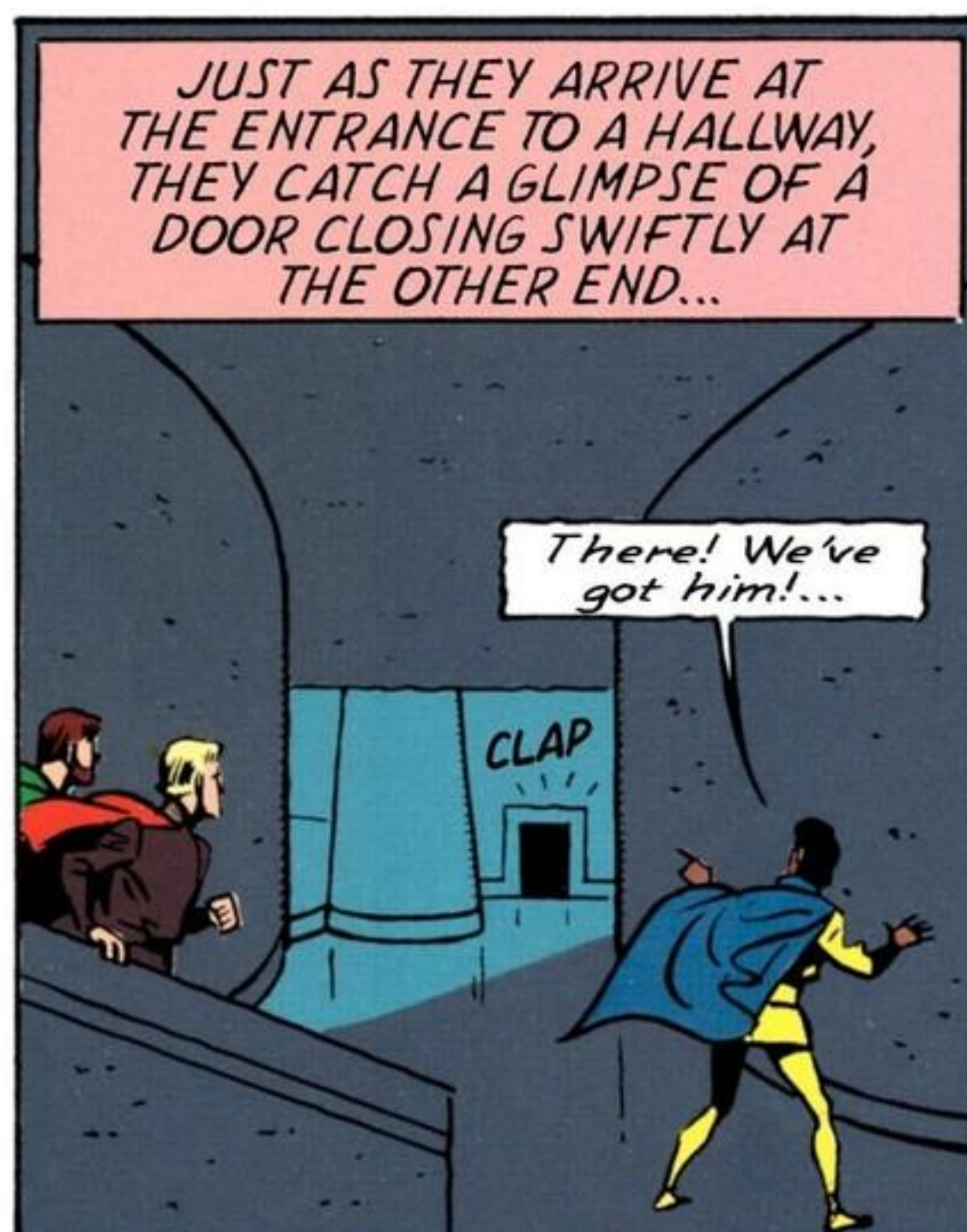
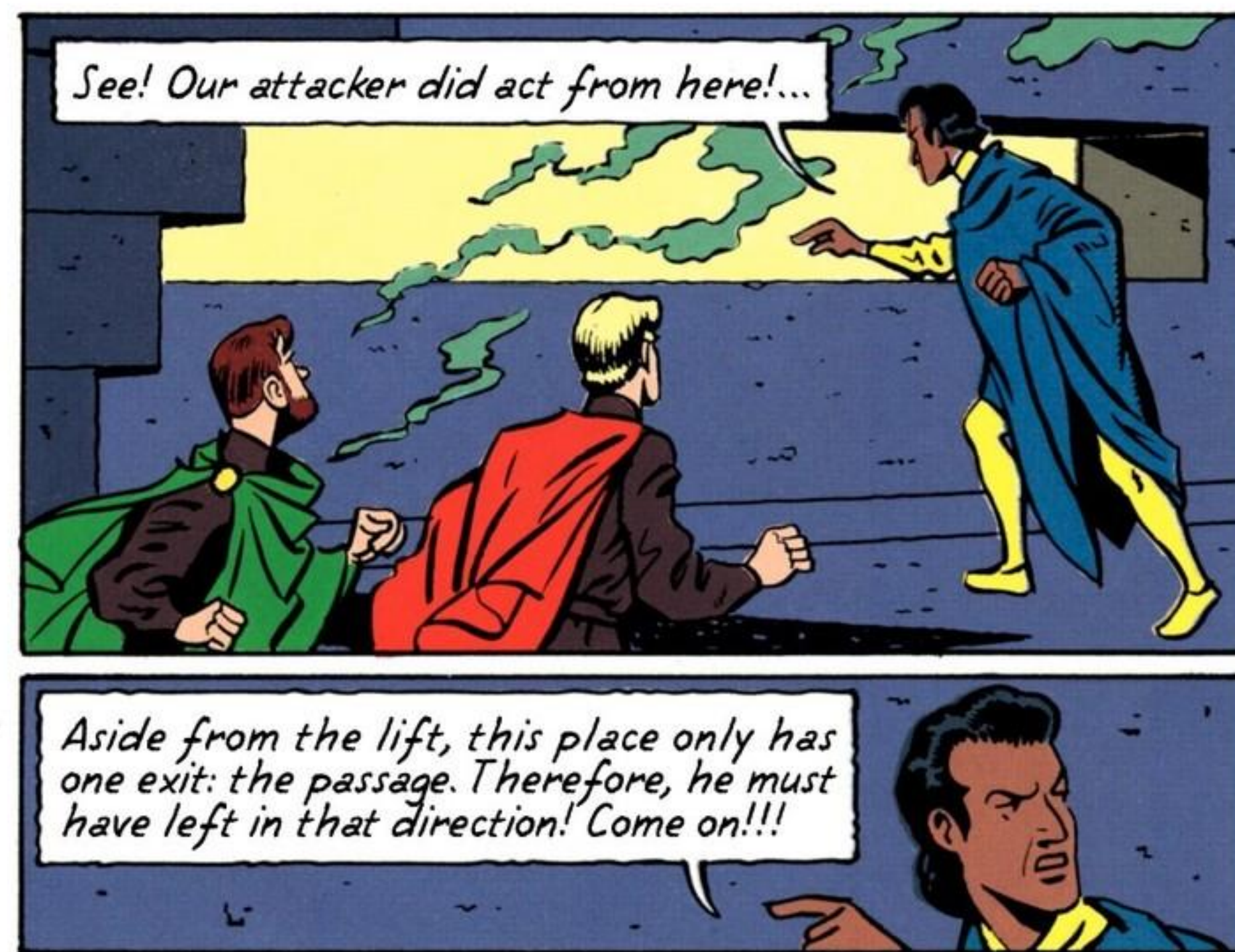
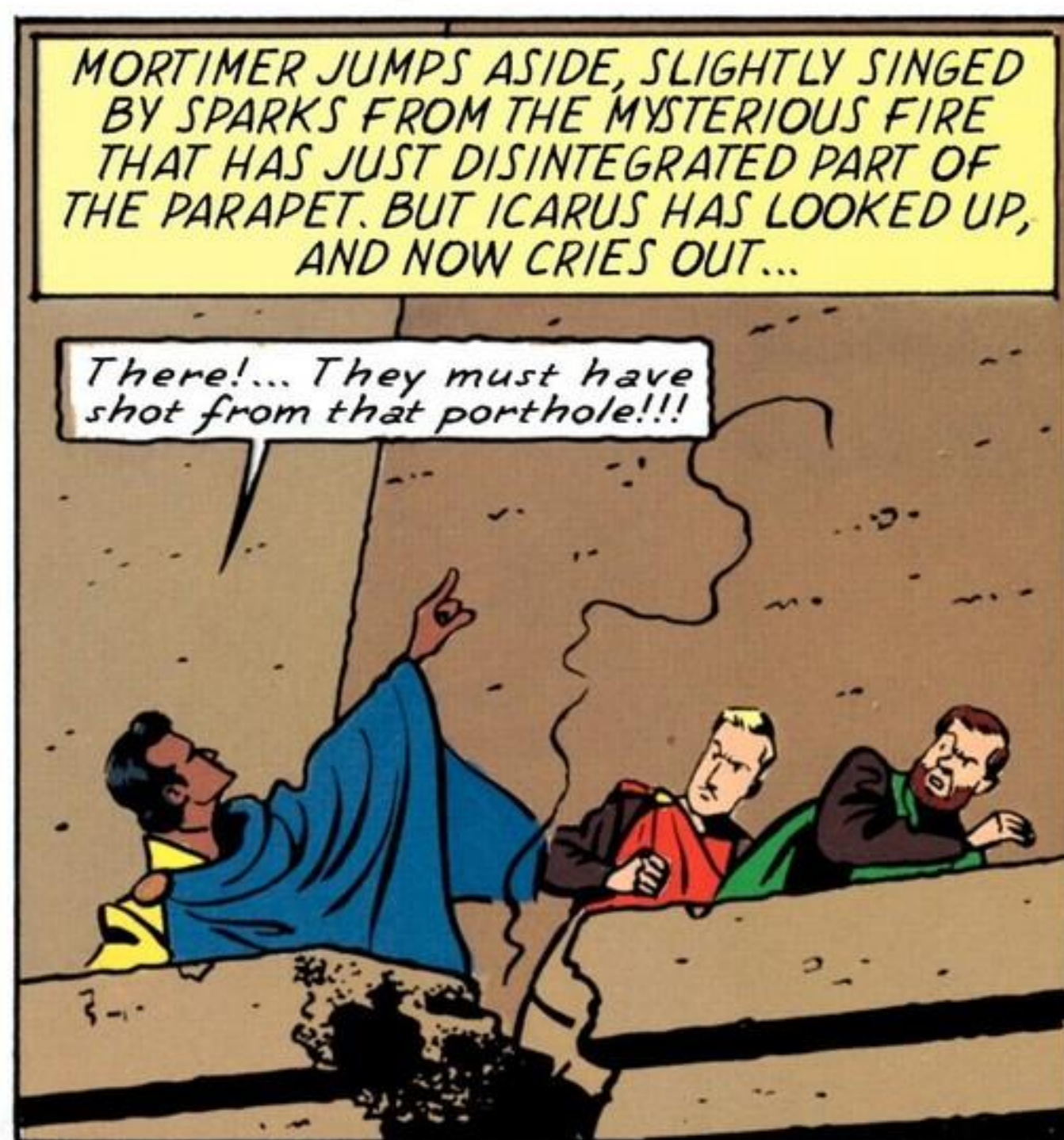


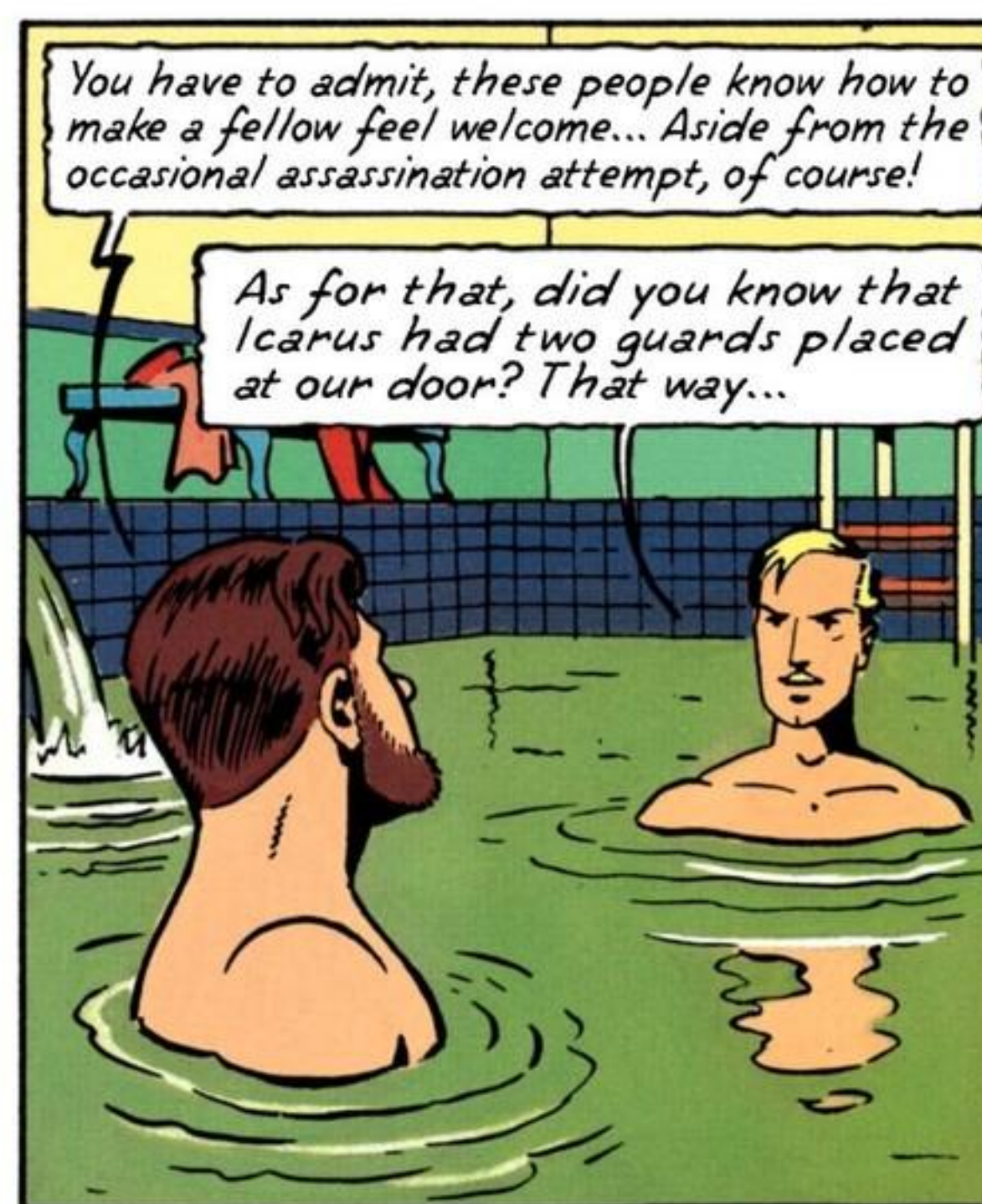
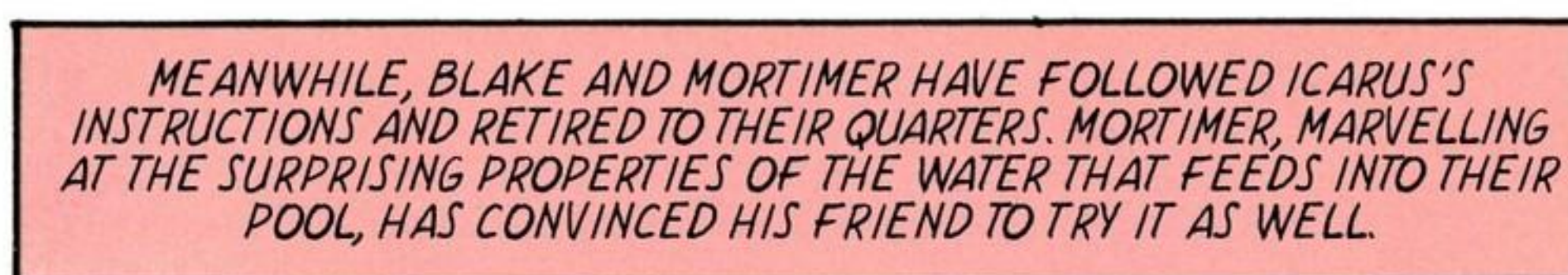
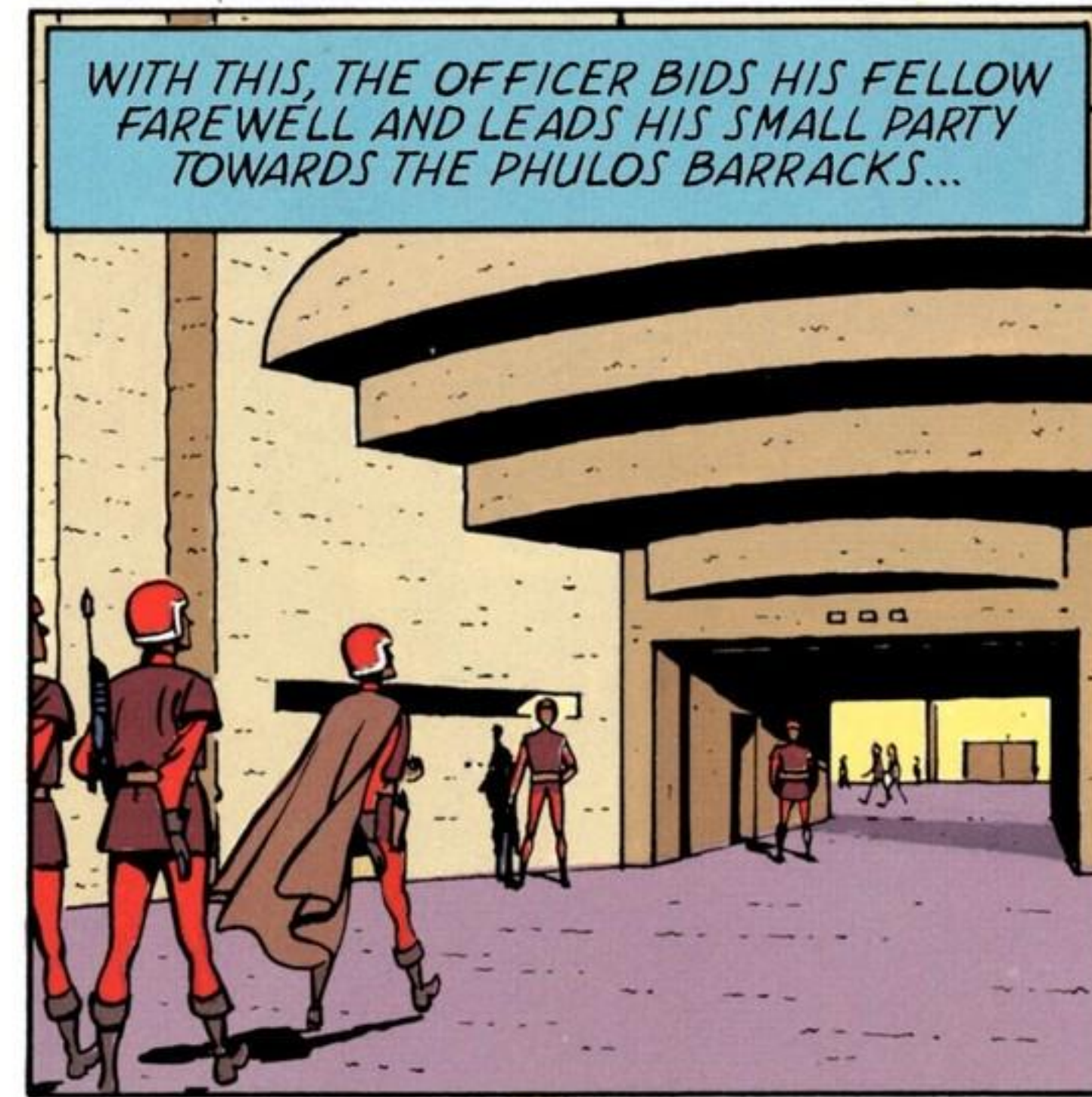
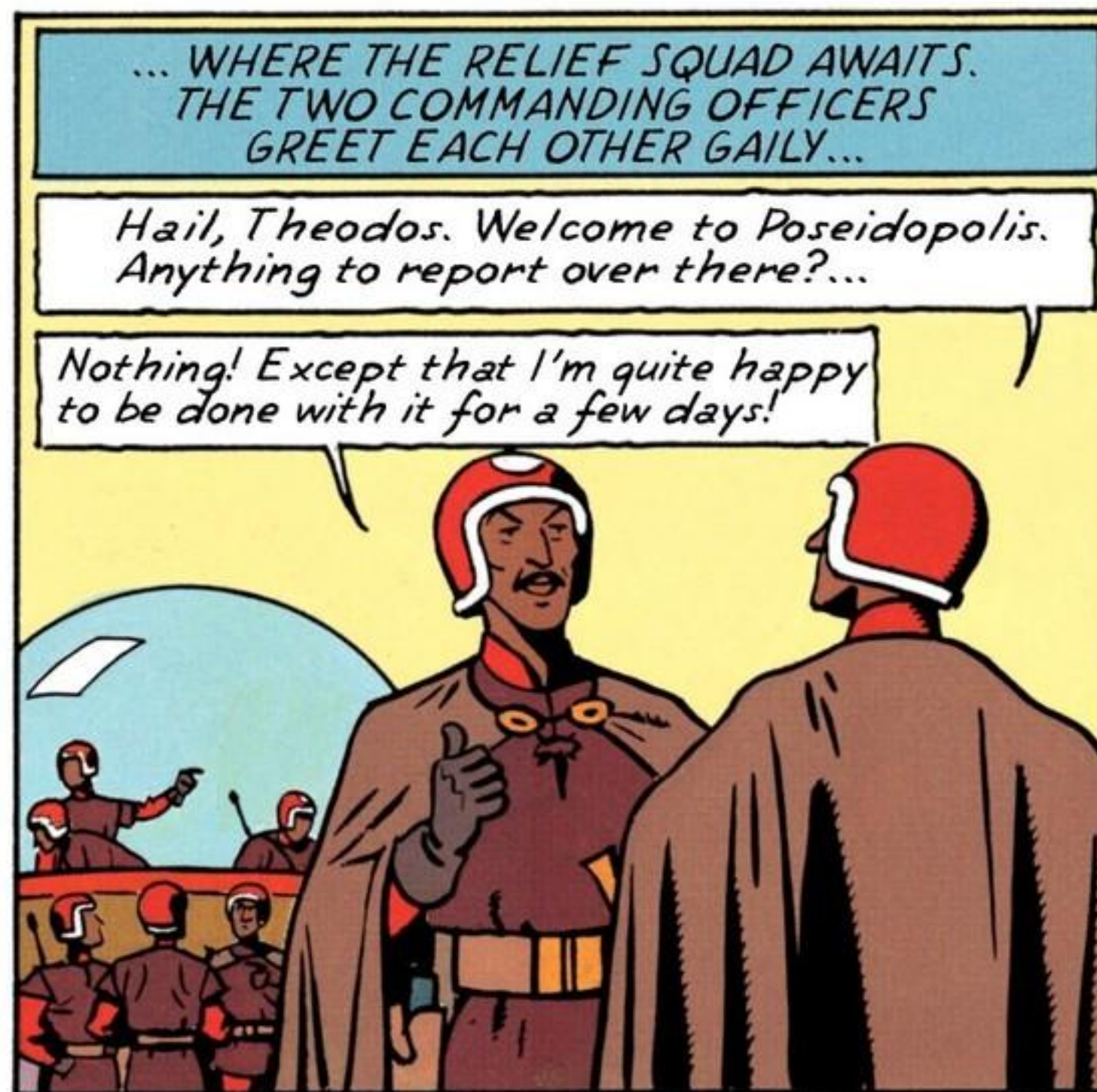
*SQUADRON

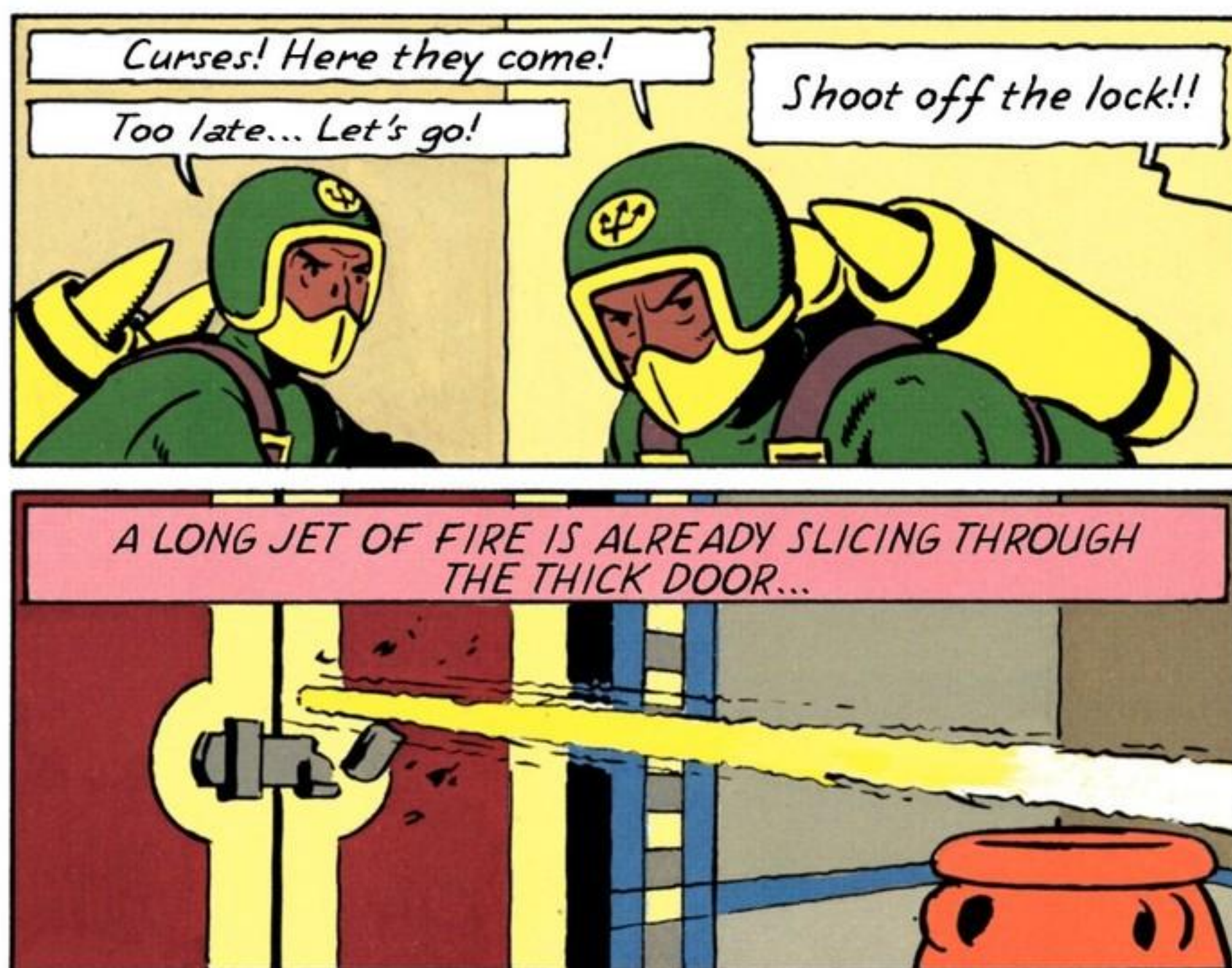
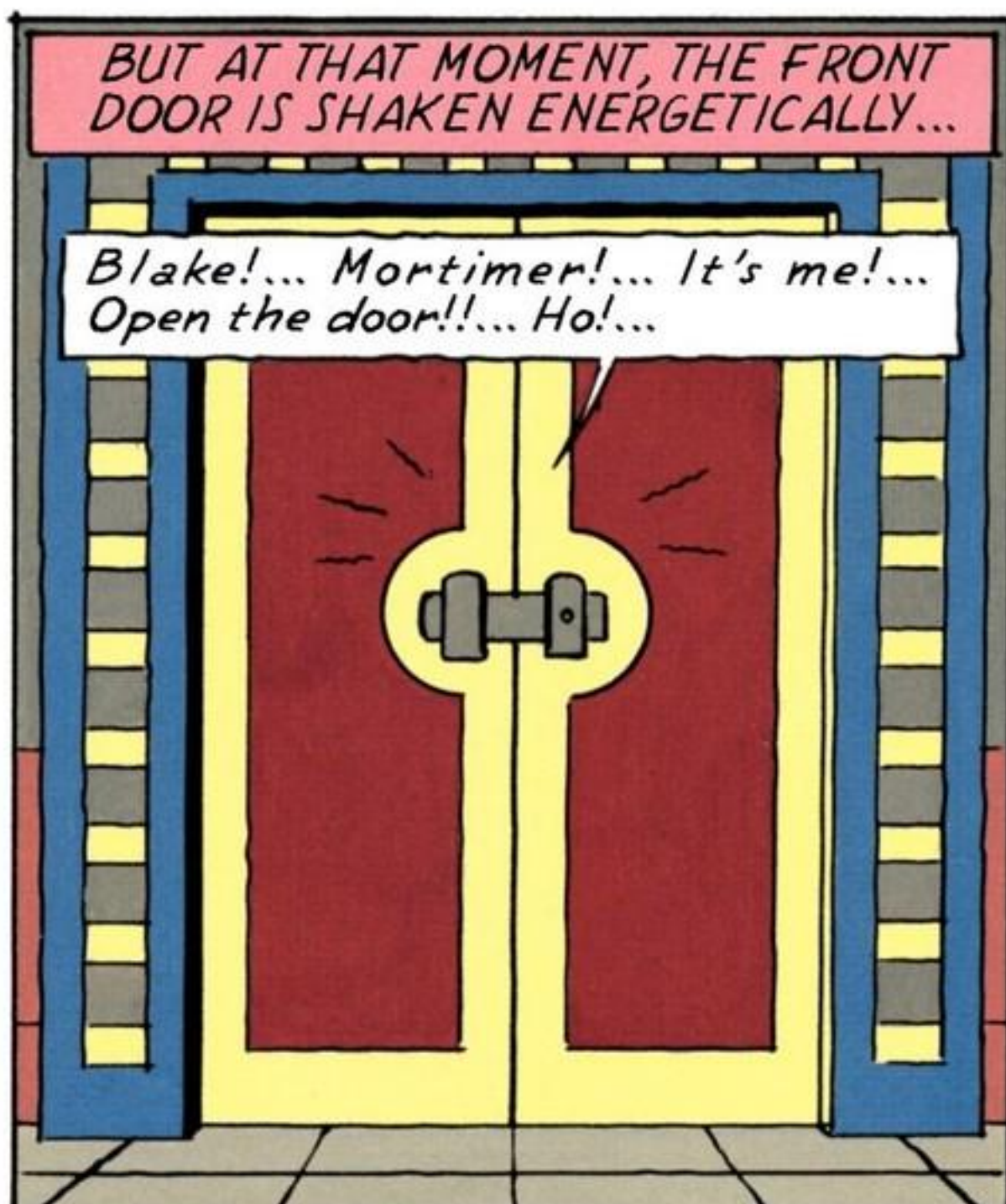
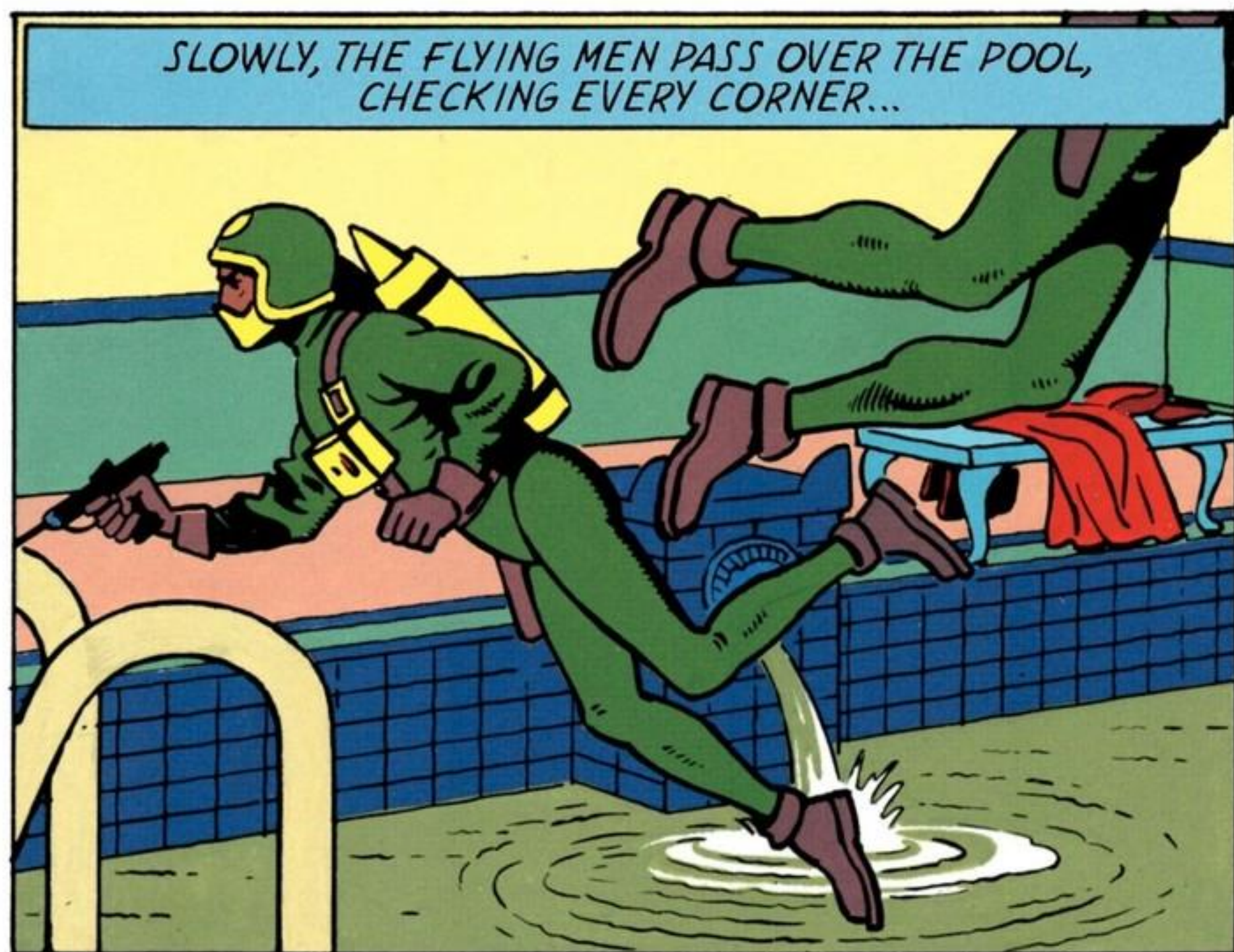
*CONTROL TOWER

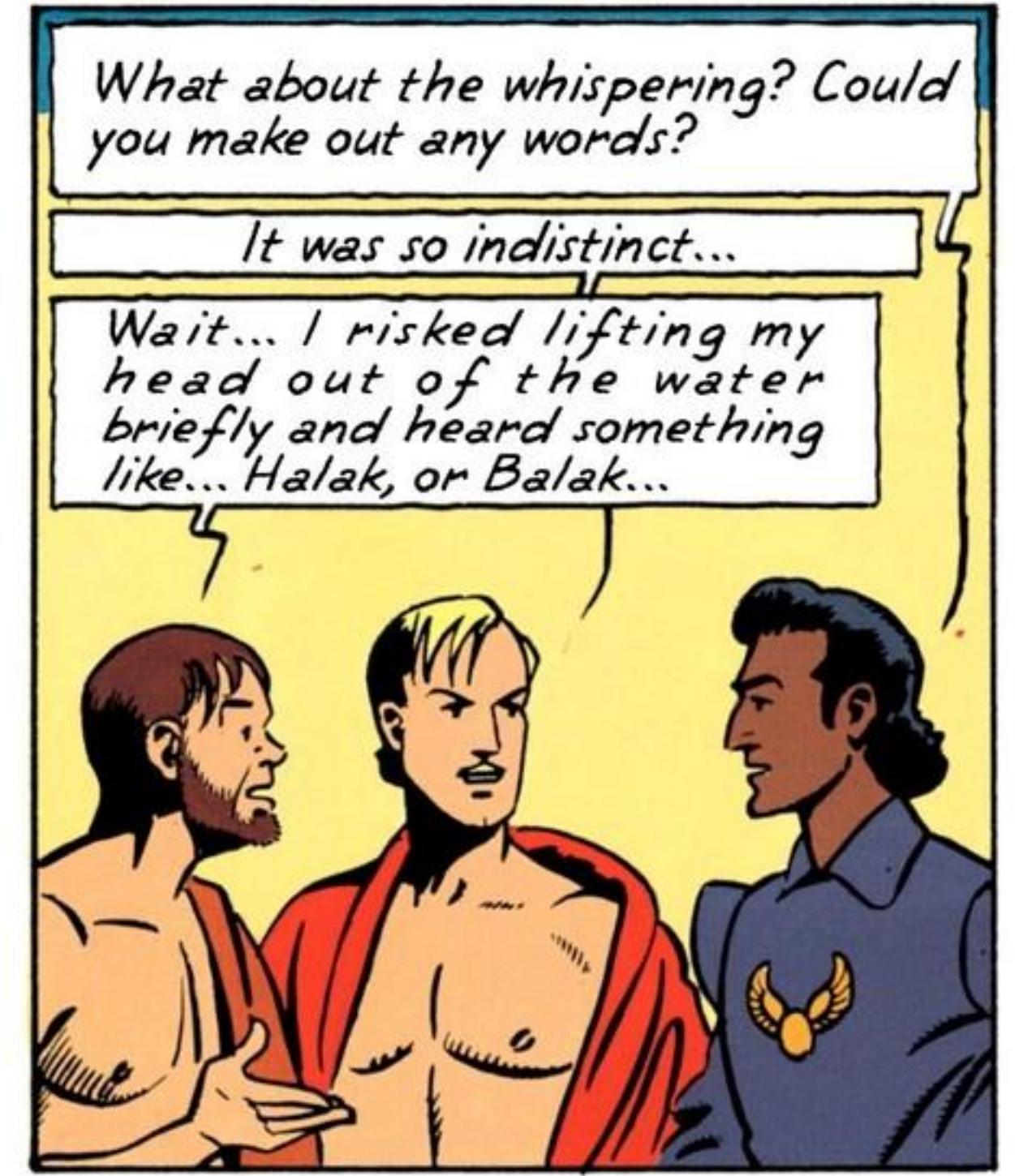
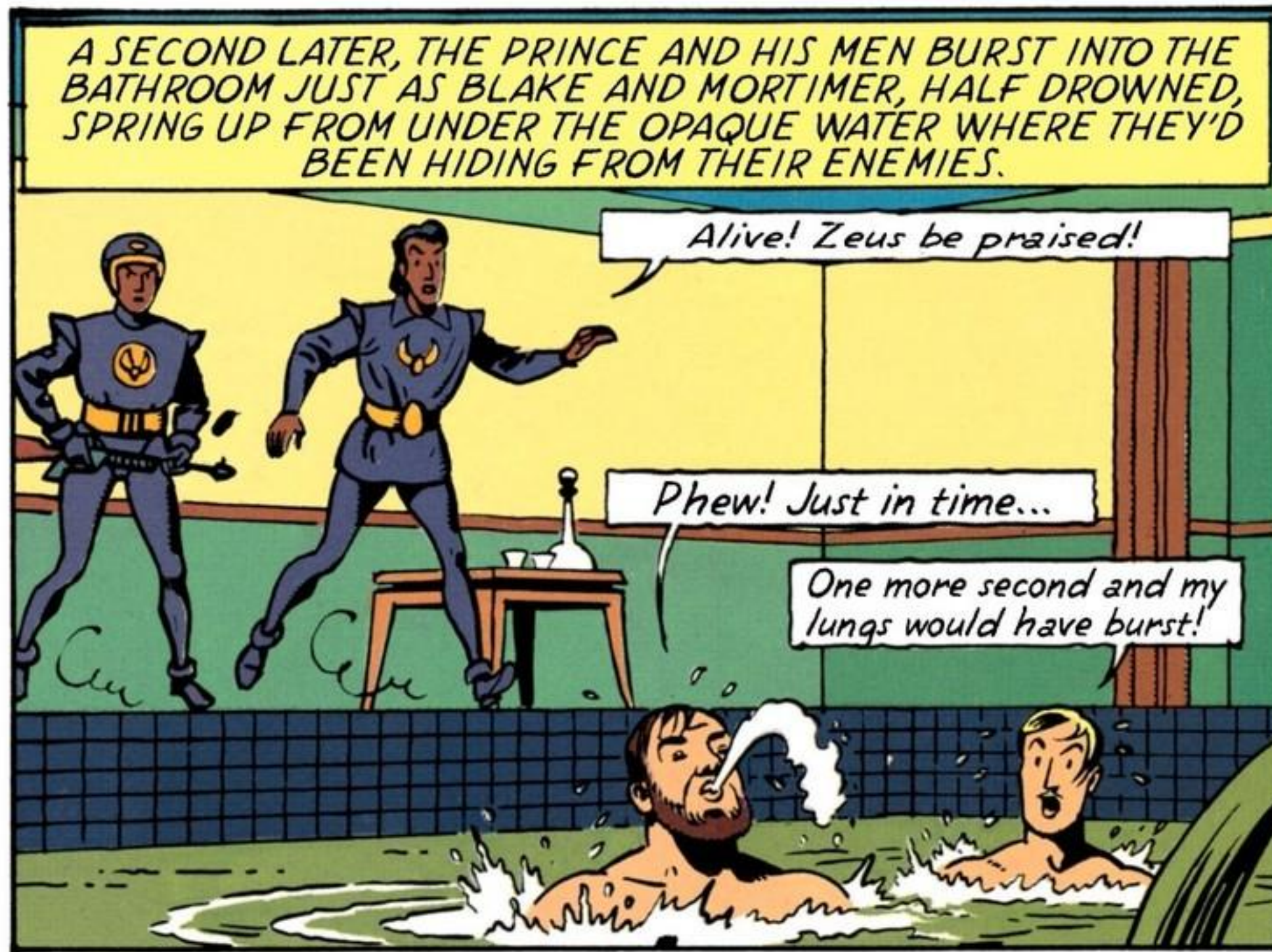




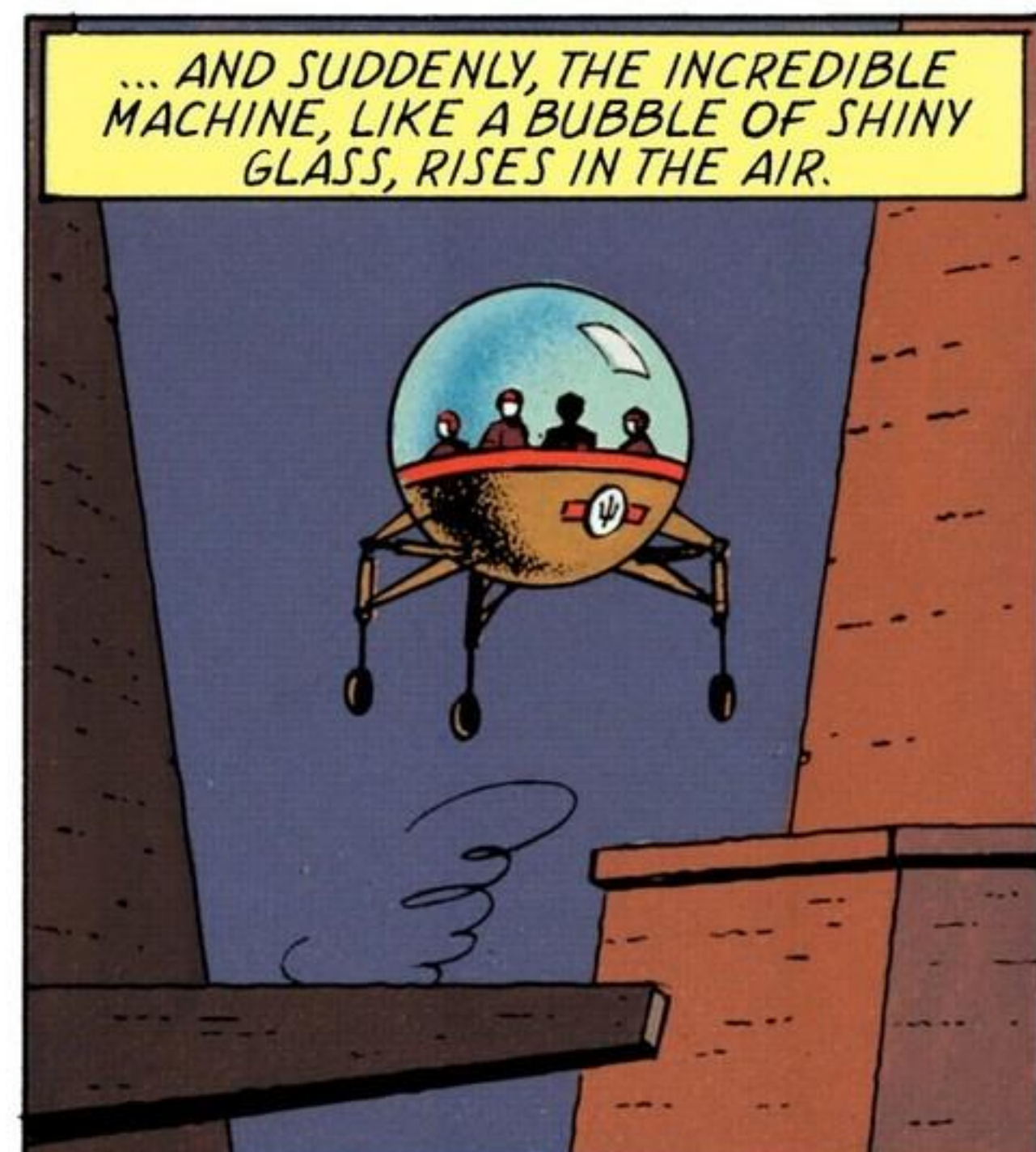
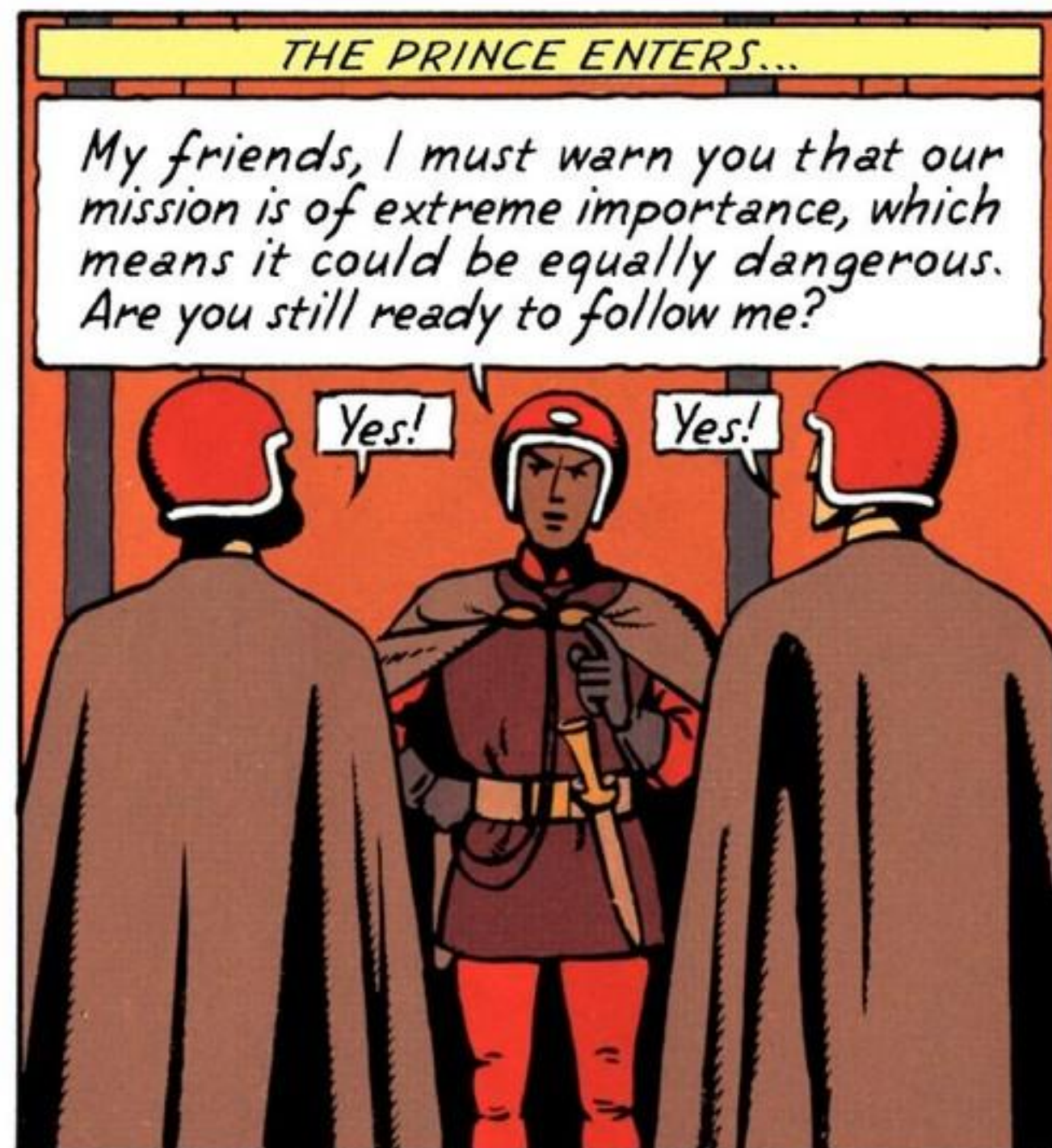
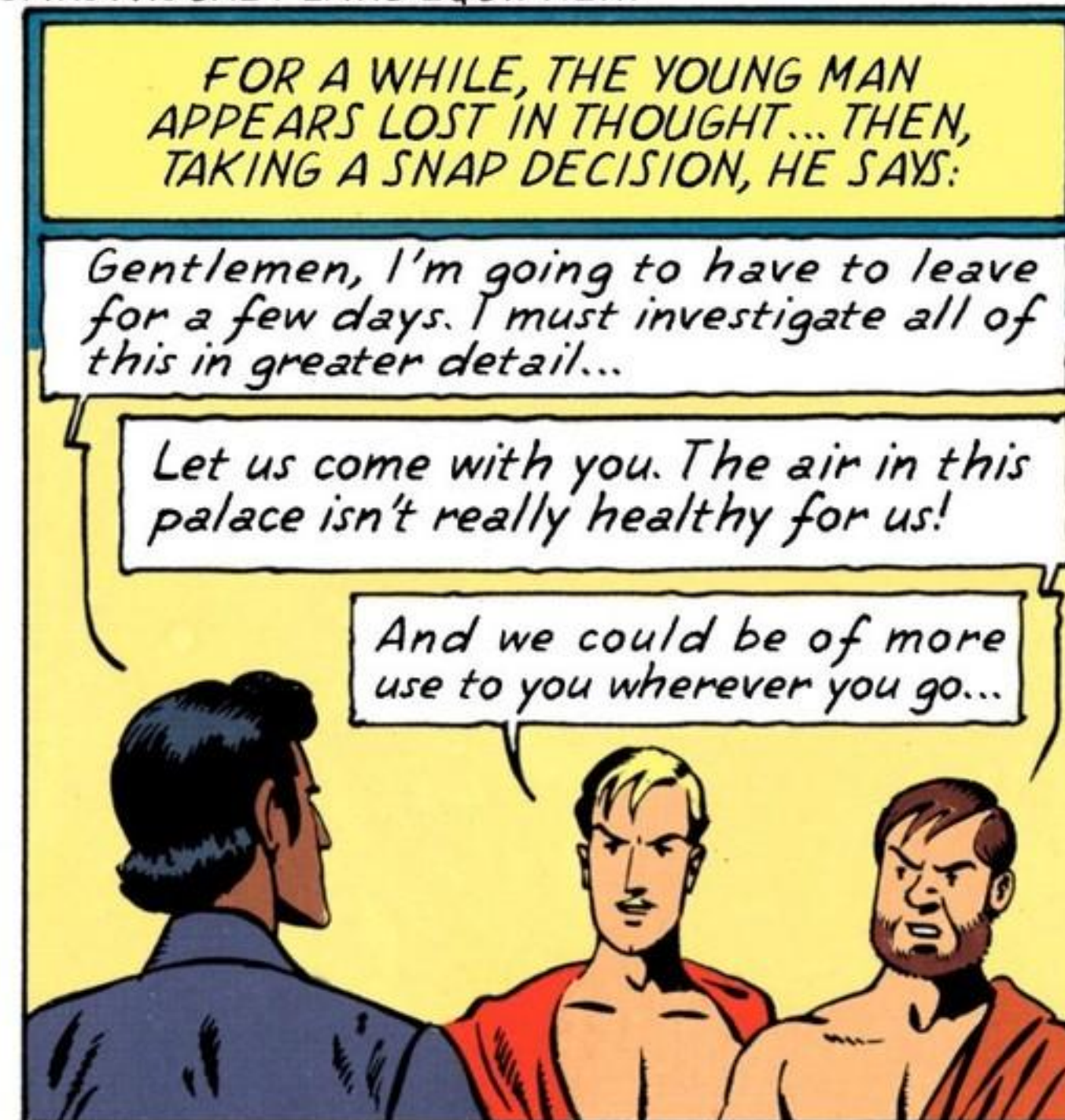


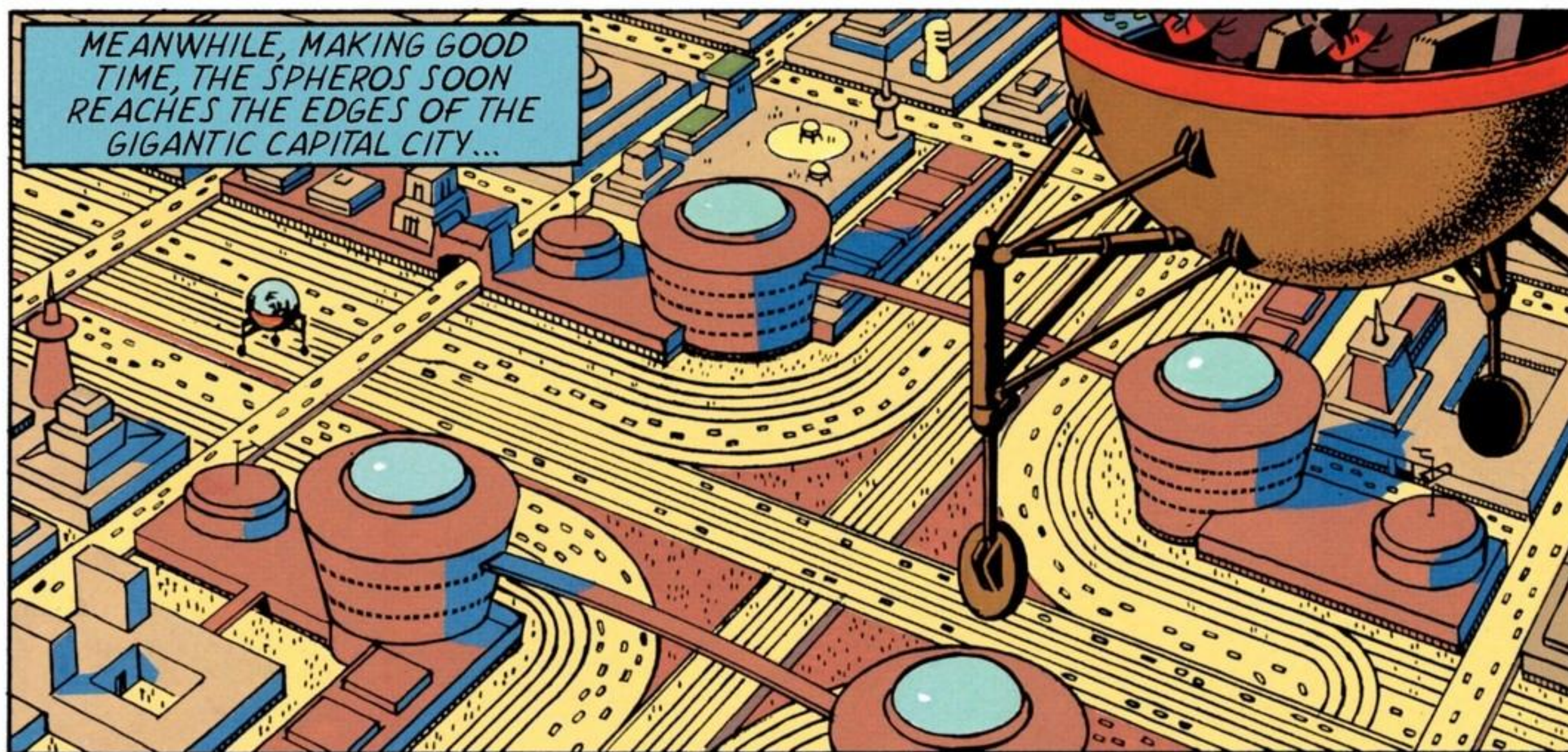






*PLANOS: INDIVIDUAL FLYING EQUIPMENT



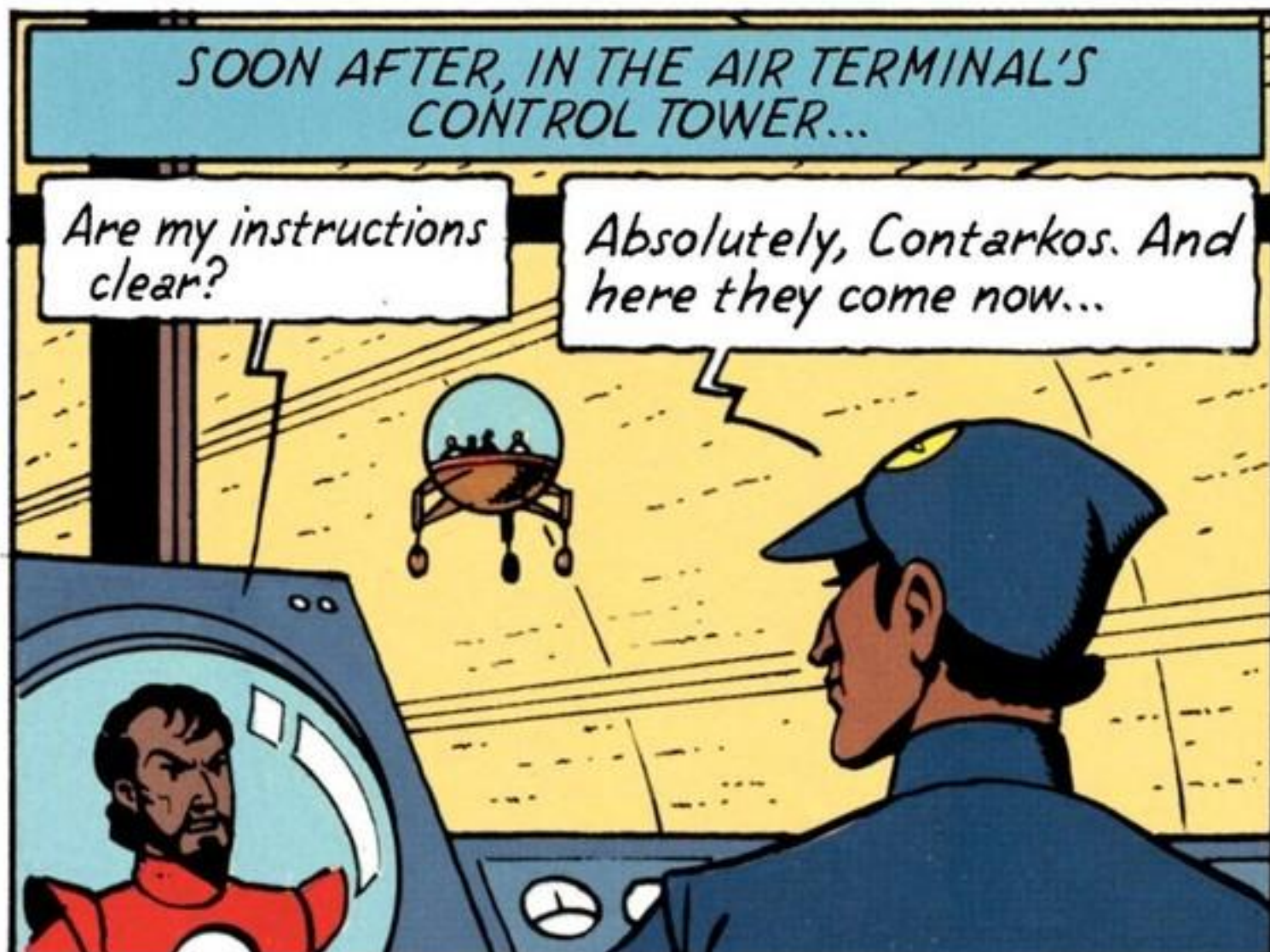


MEANWHILE, MAKING GOOD TIME, THE SPHEROS SOON REACHES THE EDGES OF THE GIGANTIC CAPITAL CITY...



... AND FLIES INTO A MASSIVE TUNNEL.

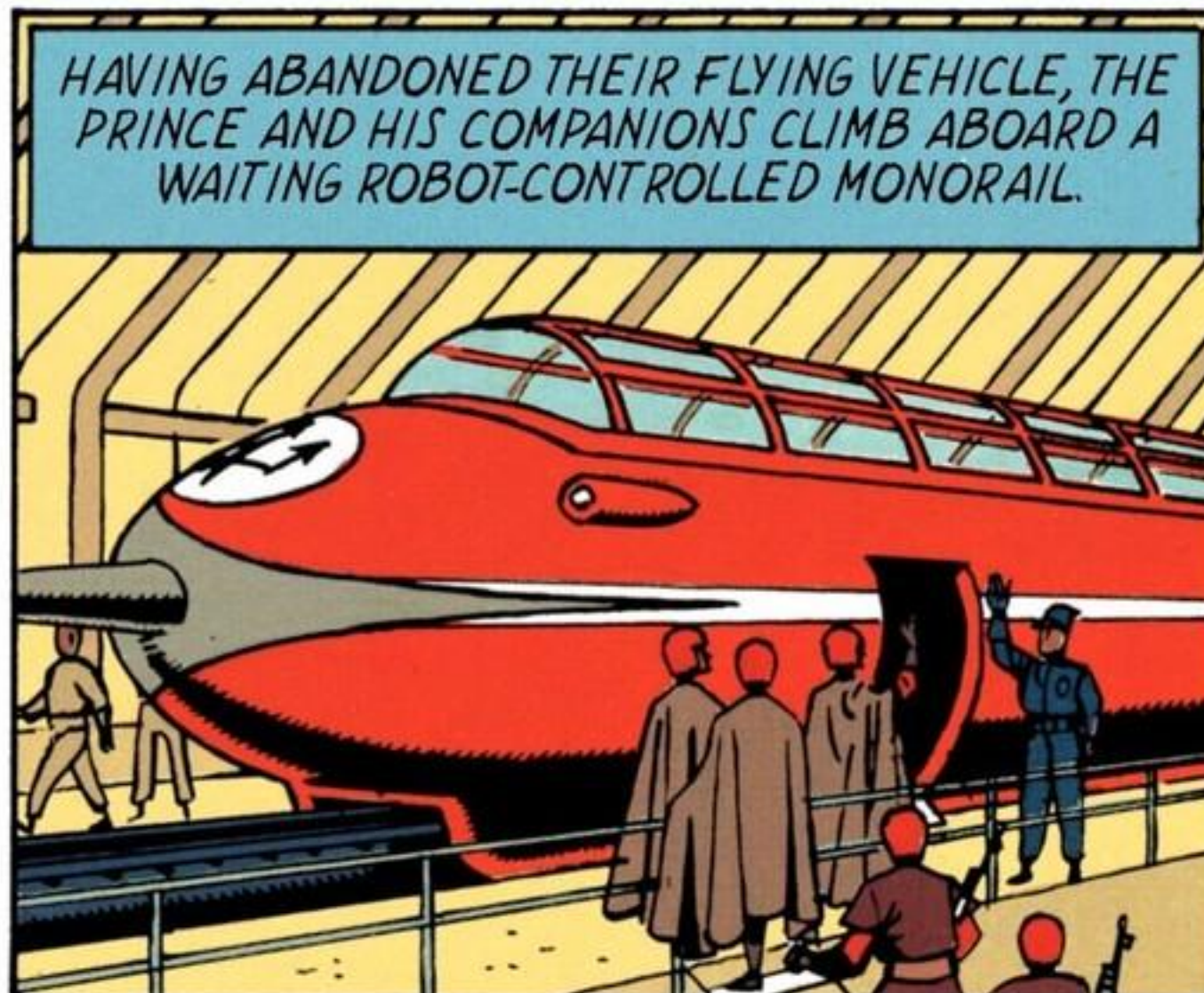
We're almost at Migos, the end of the aerial lines. There, we'll switch to a different mode of transportation.



SOON AFTER, IN THE AIR TERMINAL'S CONTROL TOWER...

Are my instructions clear?

Absolutely, Contarkos. And here they come now...



HAVING ABANDONED THEIR FLYING VEHICLE, THE PRINCE AND HIS COMPANIONS CLIMB ABOARD A WAITING ROBOT-CONTROLLED MONORAIL.

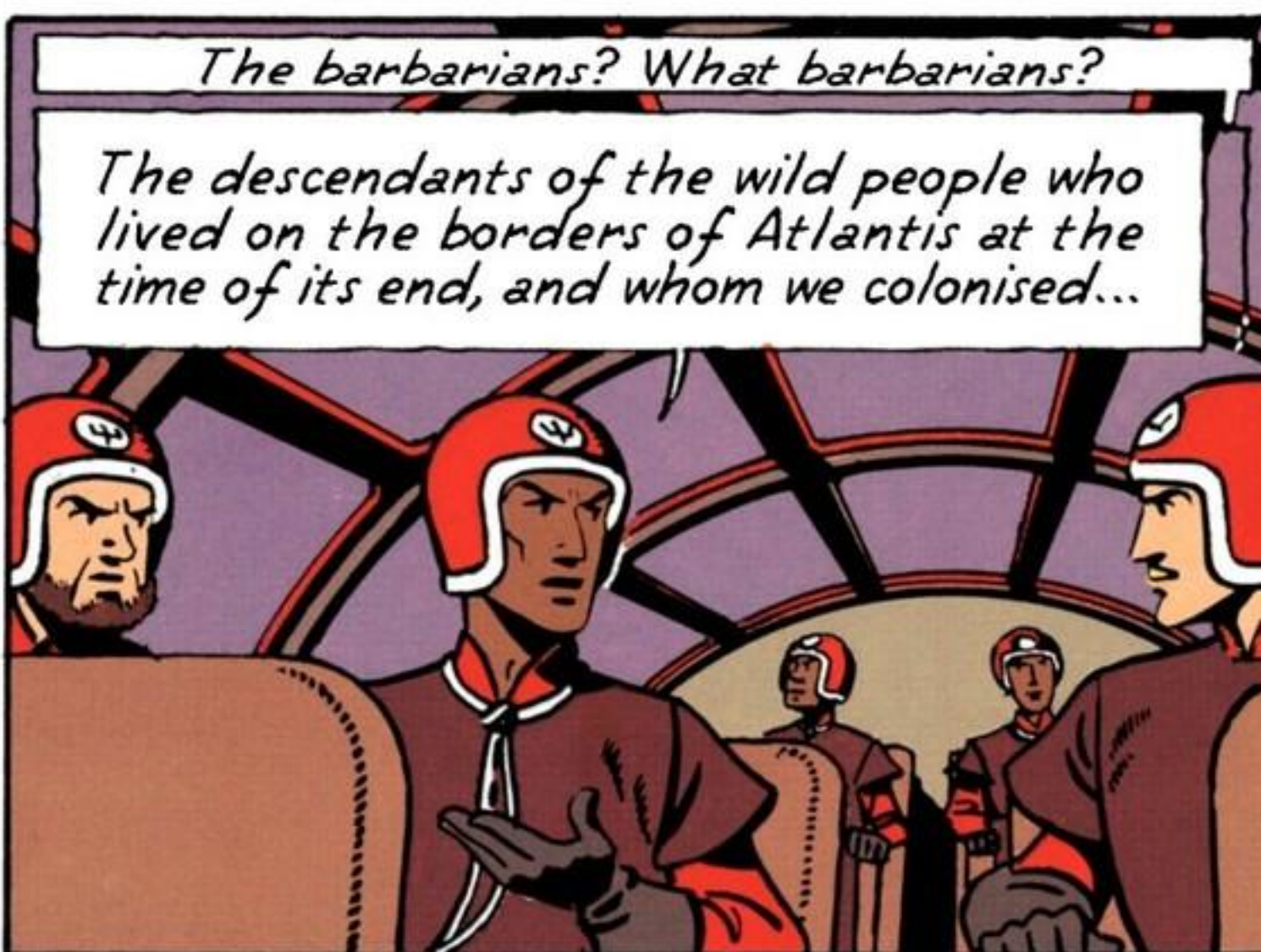


LEAVING IMMEDIATELY, THE MONORAIL ACCELERATES QUICKLY AND IS SOON SPEEDING FORWARD...



HOURS GO BY. IT PASSES THROUGH A BARREN AREA DOTTED WITH STRANGE RUINS...

There are the remains of monuments built long ago by the barbarians our ancestors fought off.



The barbarians? What barbarians?

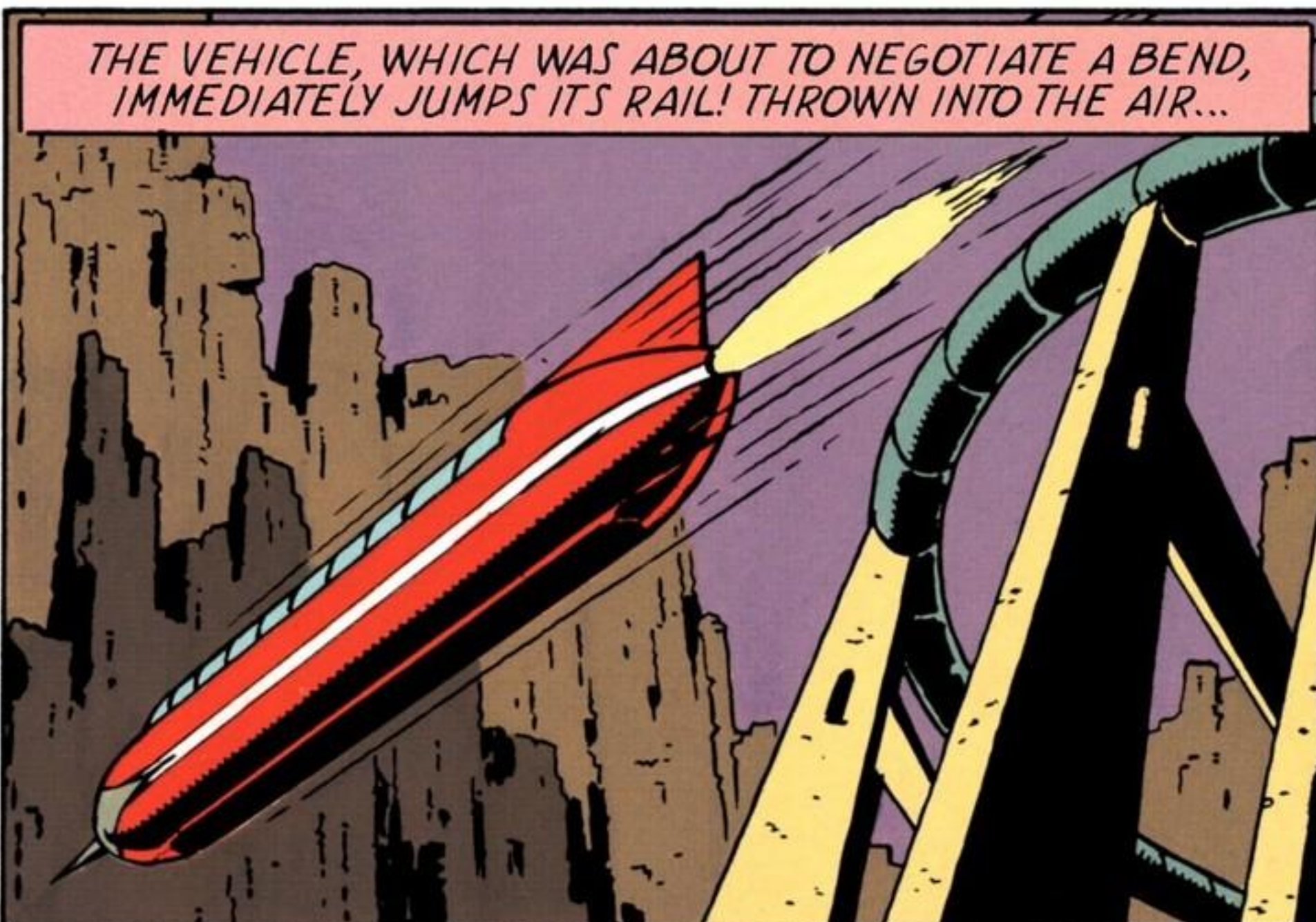
The descendants of the wild people who lived on the borders of Atlantis at the time of its end, and whom we colonised...



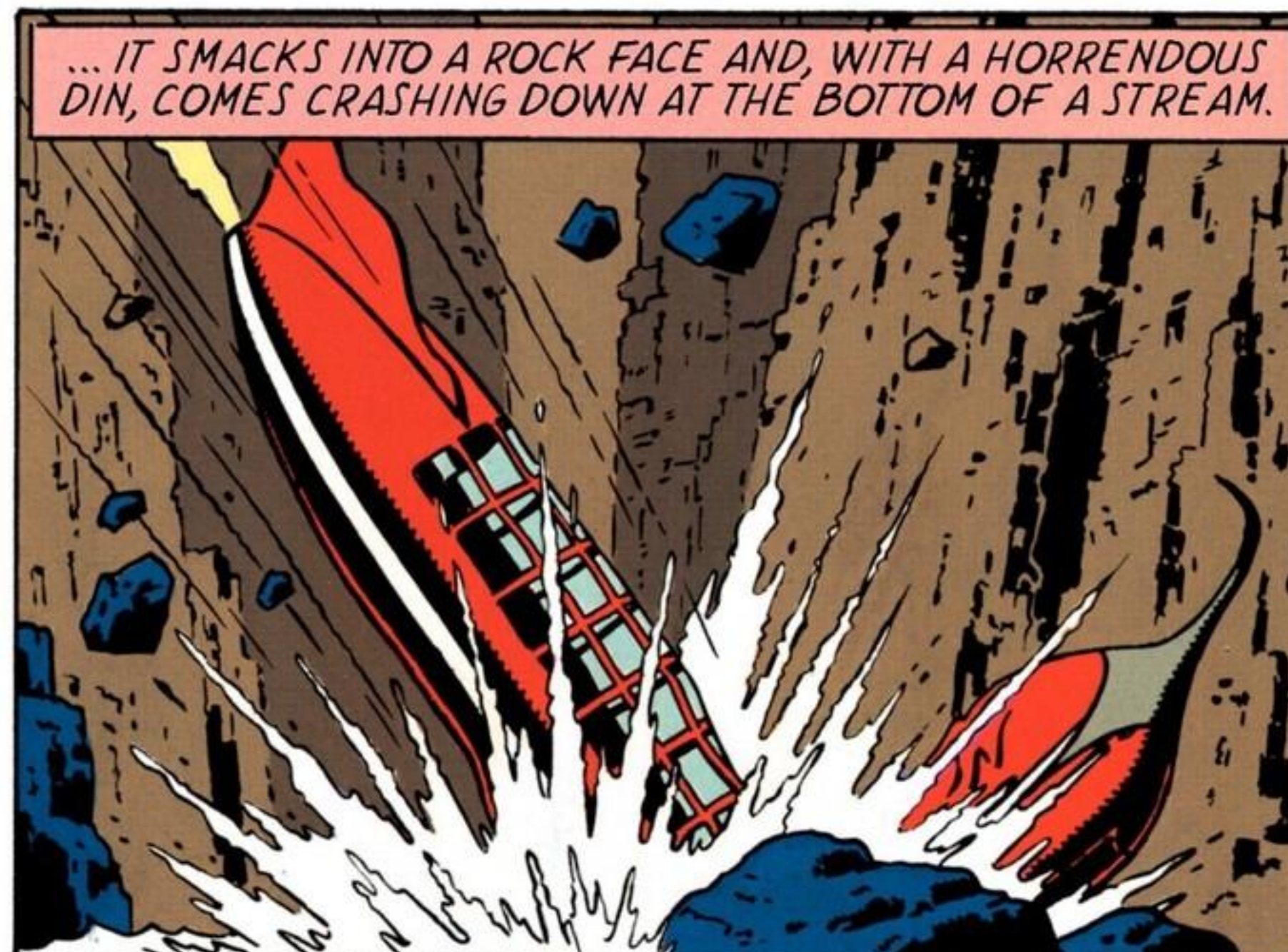
After the disaster, several of their princes joined us in our voluntary exile. But after a few centuries, they became aggressive, and their actions brought the new Atlantis to the brink of destruction. They had to be fought for a long time. They were finally pushed back far from here and have been held at bay ever since. Unfortunately...



AT THAT MOMENT, THE CHIEF CONTROLLER AT MIGOS STATION, WHO'S BEEN FOLLOWING THE PROGRESS OF THE MONORAIL SINCE ITS DEPARTURE, SUDDENLY PULLS A LEVER...



THE VEHICLE, WHICH WAS ABOUT TO NEGOTIATE A BEND, IMMEDIATELY JUMPS ITS RAIL! THROWN INTO THE AIR...



... IT SMACKS INTO A ROCK FACE AND, WITH A HORRENDOUS DIN, COMES CRASHING DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF A STREAM.



Well, that's that!!!

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, MAGON, LOCKED INSIDE HIS OFFICE, LISTENS TO HIS HENCHMAN'S REPORT, TRANSMITTED FROM THE MIGOS CONTROL TOWER.

... as the monorail I was remotely controlling reached the bend, I... followed your orders! The car fell into the stream, but by some miracle, the prince, the two surfacers, and one of the guards survived unharmed. At this moment...

Curses!

... A RESCUE MONORAIL IS LEAVING THE CRASH SITE WITH THE FOUR SURVIVORS ON BOARD.

Well! They can thank their lucky stars!

TWO HOURS LATER, AT OMEGARA—LAST ATLANTEAN OUTPOST...

Hail, Prince! I'm glad to see you safe after this unfortunate accident.

Thank you, Phokis. Alas, I lost one of my best men...

But, tell me, is our tank ready? We must continue on our way as soon as possible...

Of course! It's being brought out now.

ON THE GROUNDS OUT FRONT, SEVERAL MEN ARE BUSYING THEMSELVES AROUND A POWERFUL-LOOKING TANK.

Did you have the necessary equipment loaded aboard?

It's all there, Strategos. You have supplies for at least 10 days.

JUST BEFORE TAKING OFF, ICARUS QUICKLY WHISPERS TO THE GARRISON COMMANDER:

We'll stay in contact with you, but do not let anyone enter this sector!

Understood!

AND THE VEHICLE DRIVES AWAY, DISAPPEARING QUICKLY...

It's a hunting trip, then, is it?

So I hear... I wonder what kind of game they'll bring back!

FOR MANY LONG HOURS, THE TANK PROGRESSES ALONG THE LUMINESCENT ROAD THAT SNAKES THROUGH THE BARREN SCENERY. HERE AND THERE, THE RUINS OF ANCIENT BARBARIAN CITIES ARE STILL VISIBLE.

Hello! Omegara!... We're at point Lambda 2. Nothing to report. Over!

AS THEY ADVANCE EVER FURTHER INTO THE DESERTED WASTES, THE PRINCE BEGINS SPEAKING.

My friends, I think it's my duty to enlighten you fully about the goal of this expedition... At first, I believed that some unknown enemy was after you alone. But, now everything seems to point towards a much more extensive plot—a threat against Atlantis itself!

Surely not?!

What?!

... Yes, and I'm convinced that the key to this mystery lies at the border with the barbarian kingdom, to which we are now very close. Take these weapons; they could come in handy...

Ah! I'll feel much better with this little toy at my side!

Thank you, Prince.

BACK AT THE PALACE, THE TRAITOR MAGON AND HIS HENCHMEN, HUNCHED OVER A RADAR SCREEN, HAVE KEPT THEIR EYES ON OUR FRIENDS THE WHOLE TIME...

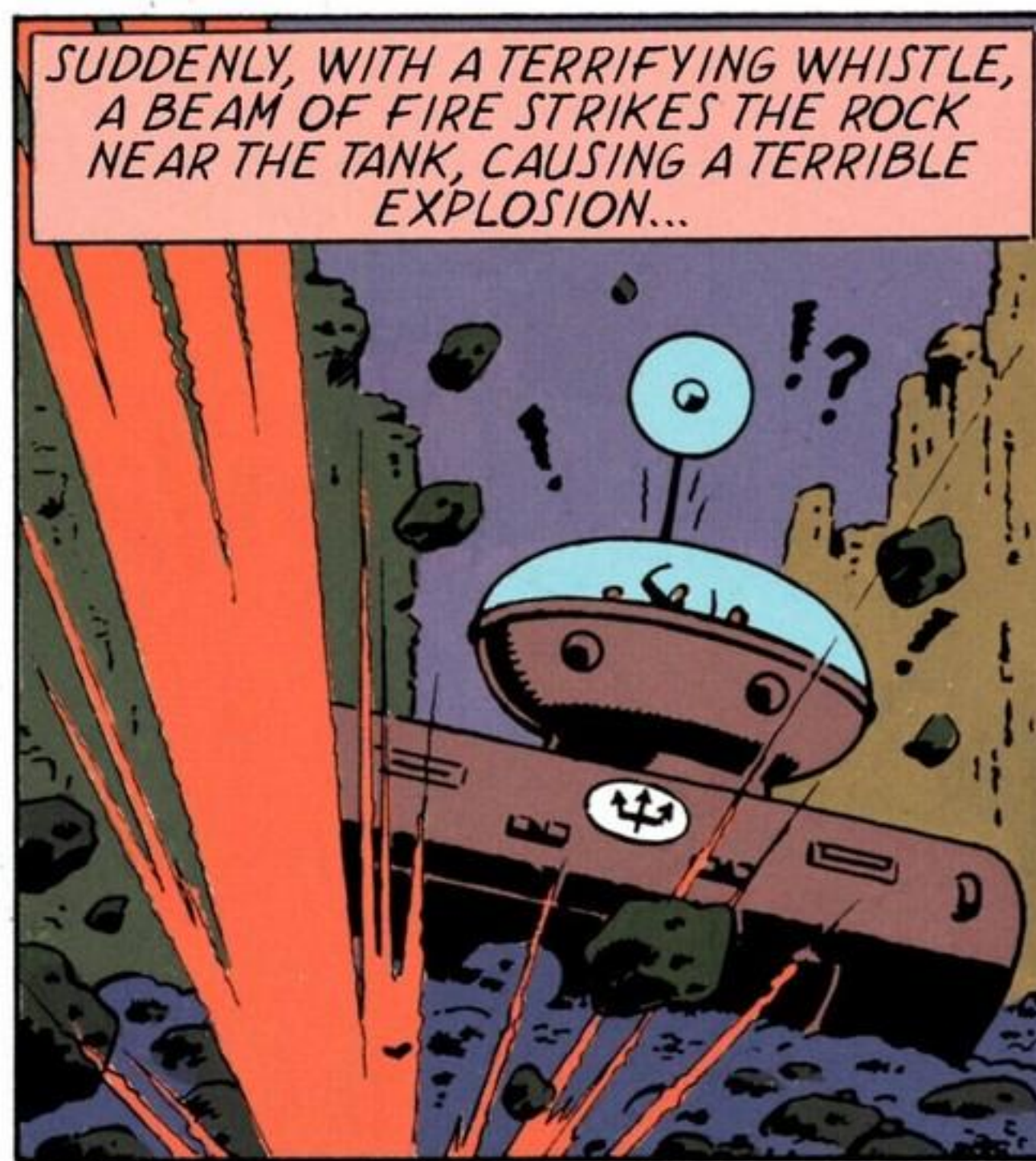
Ha! Ha! They think they'll be safe by switching frequencies... But we've got other means! Where are they?

Nearing the Sacred Gong.

THE TANK RUMBLES ON, ITS PASSENGERS UNAWARE OF THE DANGER. SUDDENLY, MORTIMER EXCLAIMS:

Look at that!!!

LIKE SOME BIRD OF ILL OMEN, A FLYING MAN HAS JUST ZIPPED BETWEEN TWO MASSIVE, COLLAPSED WALLS...



WITH THE STRANGE RAIN OF FIRE OVER, ICARUS AND HIS COMPANIONS BREAK THEIR COVER TO DISCUSS THEIR SITUATION...

It's just the three of us now. Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to shut off the video link before we left. Our enemy must have been following us using radar; therefore, he must be convinced he's destroyed us along with the tank. So, I propose we remain hidden and wait...

... for him to come.

That way, we'll know who we're dealing with!

LATER, BACK AT THE PALACE, NEWS OF THE PRINCE'S DEATH HAS CAUSED QUITE A STIR...

Yes, it seems that the Omegaara outpost heard distant explosions. They sent a patrol to investigate; it found the area blasted, but not a trace of the prince or his companions...

Strange!

... The prince's death is obviously going to have serious consequences for the future of the empire. He was the basileus's heir, and...

That's for certain! Speaking of which, did you know the basileus summoned Magon?

INDEED, THE ATLANTEAN RULER HAS CALLED THE PHULACONTARKOS TO HIM.

You must go there and personally lead the investigation. Icarus was on a very specific... and very secret mission!

Secret mission?... I thought he'd taken the surfacers hunting in...

That was the official line. The truth is that my nephew had discovered a very serious threat against the safety of the Empire. But, as he had only suspicions, he didn't want to say anything until he could offer the High Council solid proof of what he feared... All I know is that he intended to explore the border lands beyond the "Great Gate"! Go, then, and work swiftly! All of this must remain secret...

Count on me, o Basileus!

DESPITE HIS EFFORTS TO REMAIN IMPASSIVE, MAGON CANNOT HELP SHOWING HIS FEELINGS AS HE EXITS THE ROOM.

Look at his triumphant expression!

I'm not surprised! Icarus dead would put him a lot closer to the throne!

Not so loud! You never know...

PASSING THEODOS, MAGON WHISPERS QUICKLY:

Alert our friends. You know the place; at the third hour...

Yes, master!

AT THE AGREED HOUR, THE CONTARKOS LEAVES THE PALACE DISCREETLY AND BOARDS A CAR...

... WHICH IMMEDIATELY TAKES OFF, DASHING QUICKLY THROUGH THE INCREDIBLE LABYRINTH OF STREETS THAT CRISS-CROSS POSEIDOPOLIS...

... IT SOON ENTERS THE TUNNEL LEADING TO THE RESIDENTIAL AREA RESERVED FOR HIGH DIGNITARIES OF THE STATE...

... AND COMES TO A STOP BEFORE THE GATE OF A RICH HOUSE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A LOVELY ARTIFICIAL GARDEN.

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, MAGON ENTERS A LARGE ROOM WHERE A DOZEN INDIVIDUALS ARE GATHERED.

Hail!

Hail to you all!

Hail!

IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDED, HE DECLARES EXULTANTLY:

I bring great news!... My lords, the time has come to act!

Speak!

Tell us!

Like me, you want to shake off the yoke of this hated dynasty. Like me, you refuse to follow our current tyrant in his insane project. Like me, you want to climb back to the light, take back from the surfacers the land they usurped from us, and see mighty Atlantis once again dictate its law to the world... Well, all of this is now within our grasp! Indeed, following some extraordinary circumstances I cannot explain right now, a providential ally has come to us. He has been so successful at rallying the barbarians to our cause that King Tlalac is ready to put his troops at my disposal. He only awaits my signal. What do you say?...



AN APPROVING WHISPERING FOLLOWS THIS SPEECH, BUT ONE OF THE CONSPIRATORS RAISES AN OBJECTION...

Your words fill us with joy, Magon. But aren't you afraid that the barbarians, once victory is achieved, might prove themselves... demanding? Can't we act alone?

Impossible! There are too few of us, and the basileus's prestige is still too great. A strong shock is necessary to shake up the Atlanteans' complacency.



Trust me. Let's allow them to do the... hard part. And if, afterwards, they were to prove too much of a nuisance, well, we have the means to get rid of them!

Magon is right! Well spoken! True! Yes, yes!

Excellent! I'm heading out there... All must man their positions now and act quickly. The attack could come at any moment!... Oh... An armband bearing a black sun will mark our supporters. Go now!

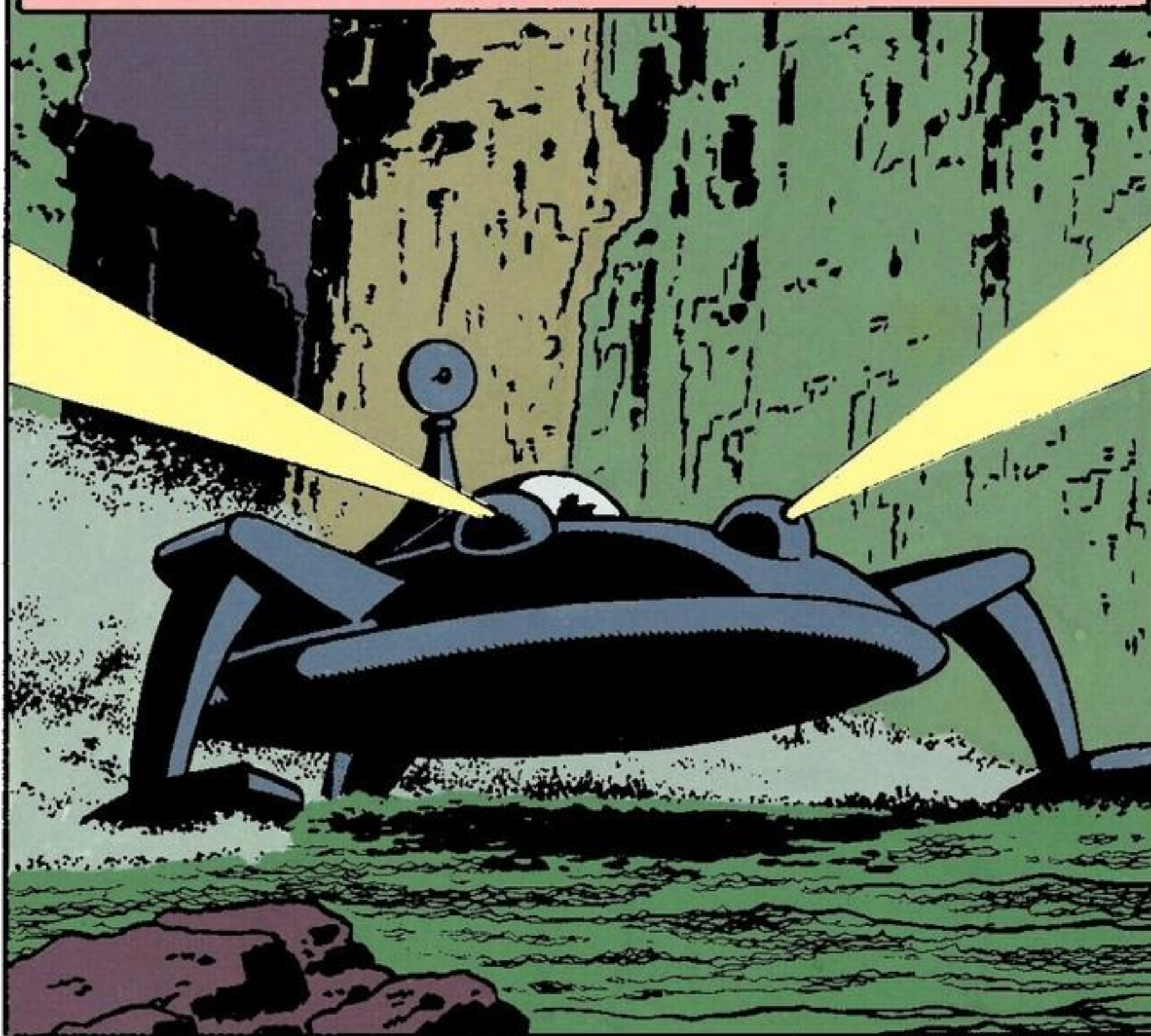


IN THE MEANTIME, ICARUS AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE KEPT GOING, TAKING THE LONG WAY AROUND THROUGH DARK, FORGOTTEN FOOTPATHS IN ORDER TO AVOID SEARCH PARTIES AND KEEP THEIR AS-YET-UNKNOWN ENEMY IGNORANT OF THEIR FATE... THEY HAVE JUST STOPPED ON THE BANKS OF A RIVER, ITS WATERS SWIFT AND TUMULTUOUS, WHEN ICARUS SHOUTS OUT:

A river patrol! Get down!...



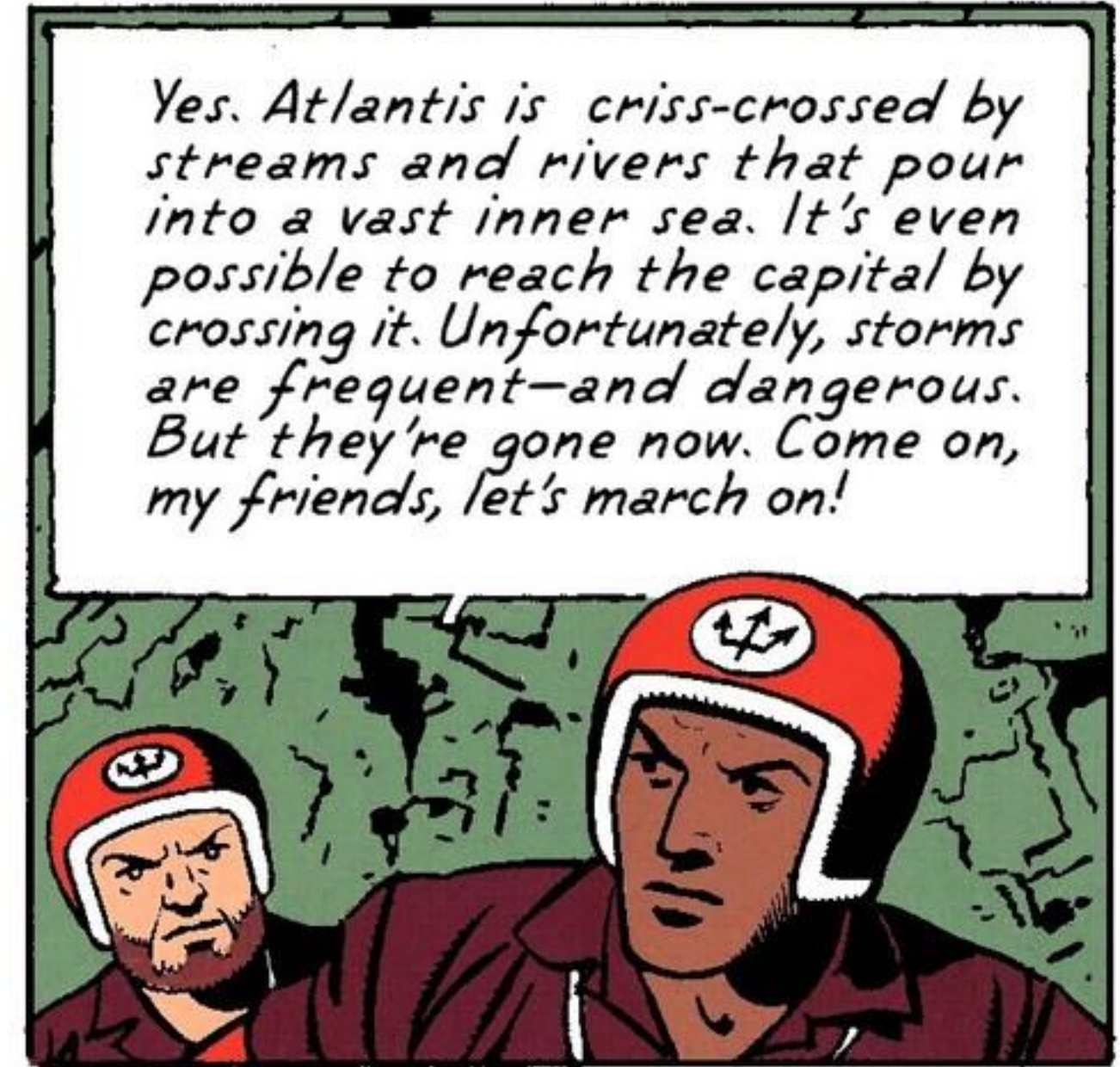
A BIZARRE-LOOKING VESSEL APPEARS, CARRYING A GROUP OF PHULOS AND SWEEPING ITS SURROUNDINGS WITH POWERFUL SEARCHLIGHTS...



Where on Earth do they come from? One of the ports along the coast... The coast?!



Yes. Atlantis is criss-crossed by streams and rivers that pour into a vast inner sea. It's even possible to reach the capital by crossing it. Unfortunately, storms are frequent—and dangerous. But they're gone now. Come on, my friends, let's march on!



THE LONG WALK RESUMES... FINALLY, AFTER SEVERAL HOURS, THEY REACH THE MAIN ROAD, EXHAUSTED. MORTIMER IS ABOUT TO STEP ONTO IT...

At last, we'll be able to walk properly!



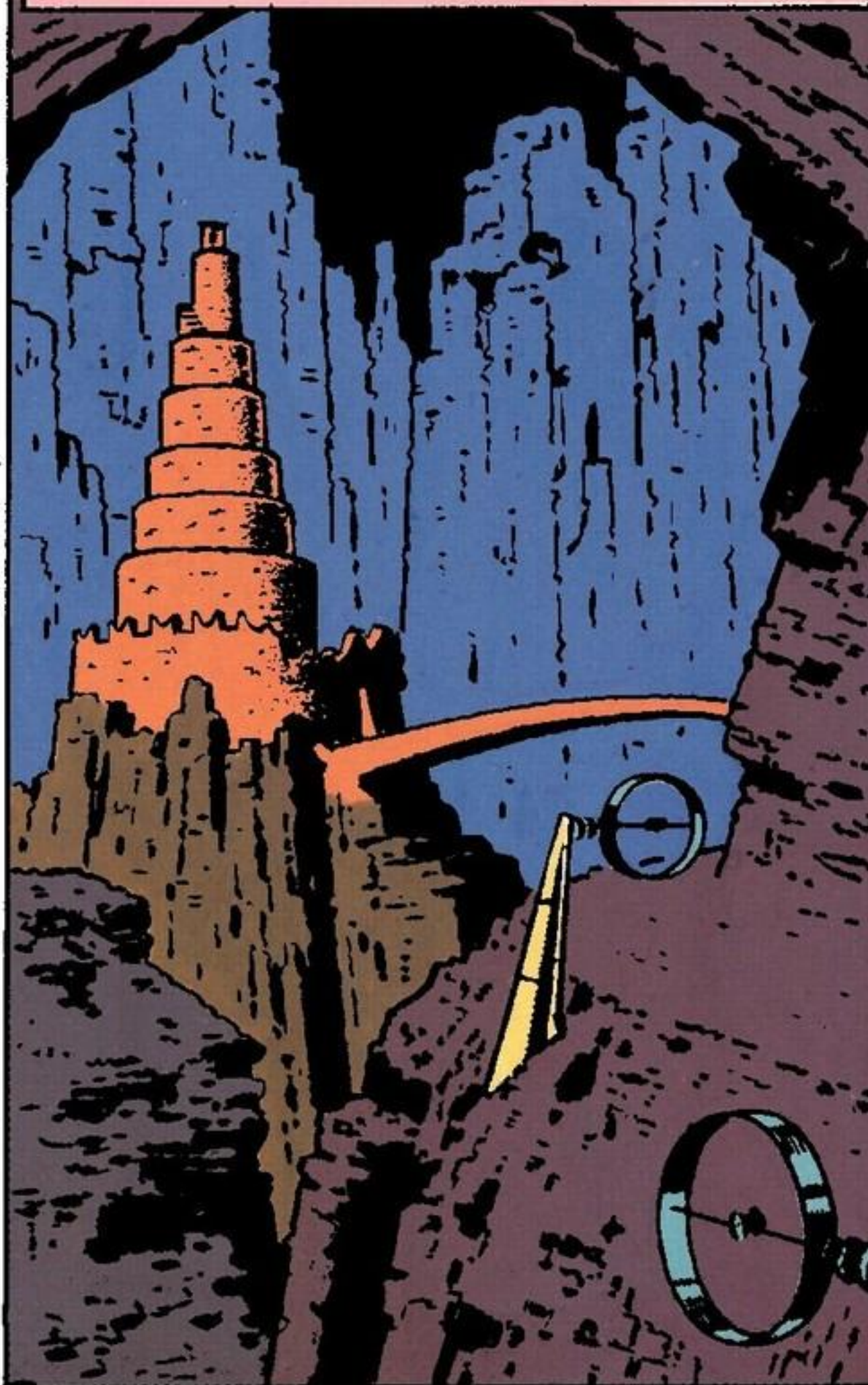
... BUT ICARUS STOPS HIM.

Stop! We'd inevitably be detected by these relays that dot the length of the road, and immediately reported! I'm afraid we must stick to the bottom of the bank. Anyway, we're almost where we need to be...

Goodness!



INDEED, AFTER A FEW MINUTES, A TALL, TIERED TOWER APPEARS, SET ON A ROCKY PEAK. HALF RUINED, IT IS CONNECTED TO THE ROAD BY A NARROW BRIDGE.



THE THREE MEN HAVE HALTED.

What is that?

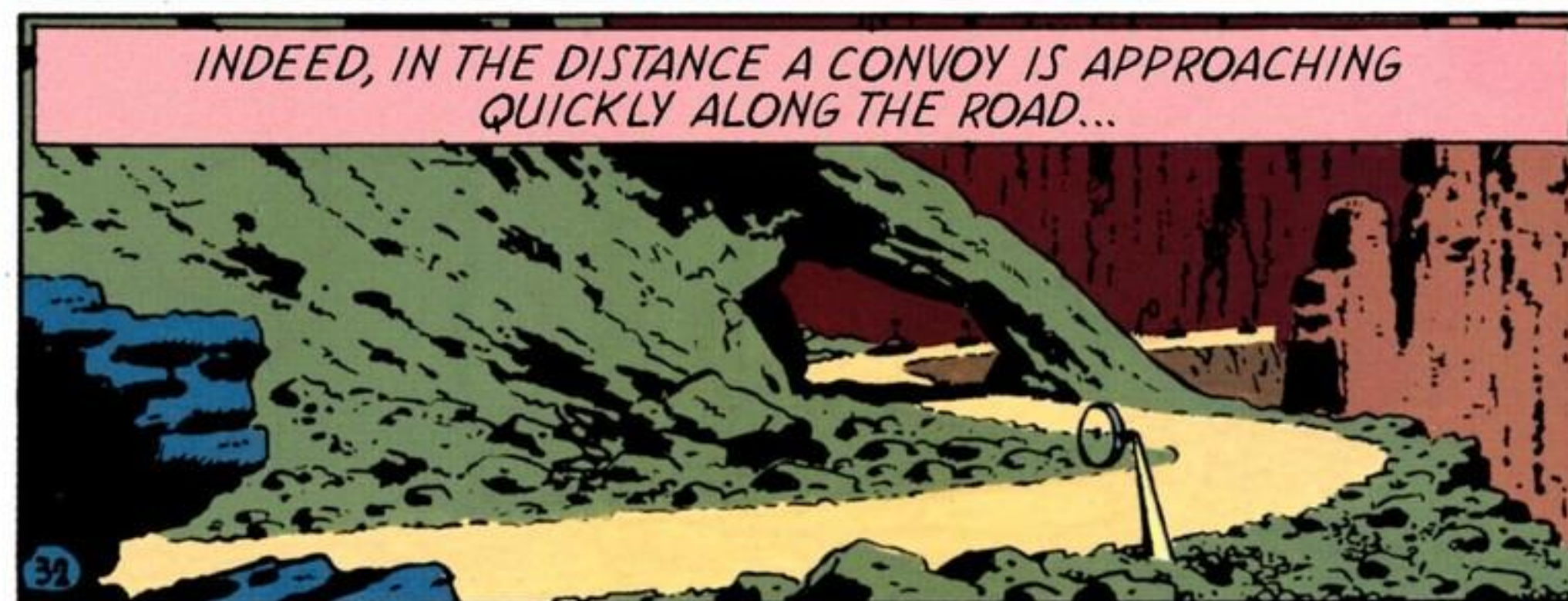
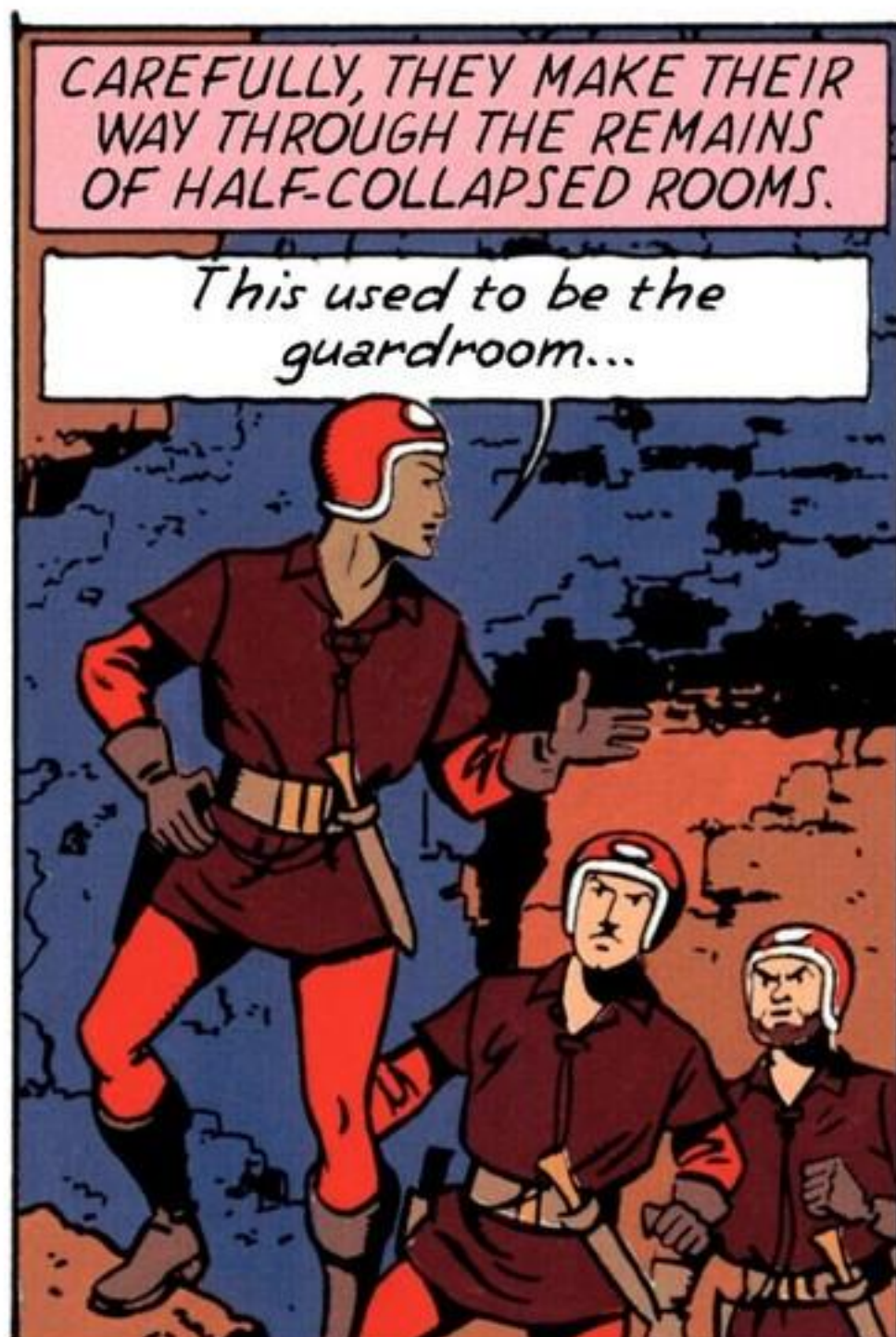
The Sacred Gong!... In the past, it was the very last outpost guarding the defile through which barbarian invasions would pour into Atlantis. There's an enormous gong at the top... Thanks to some strange acoustic phenomenon, its sound could be heard all the way to Poseidopolis!



BUT BLAKE, WHO HAS BEEN CAREFULLY SCANNING THE HORIZON, INTERRUPTS...

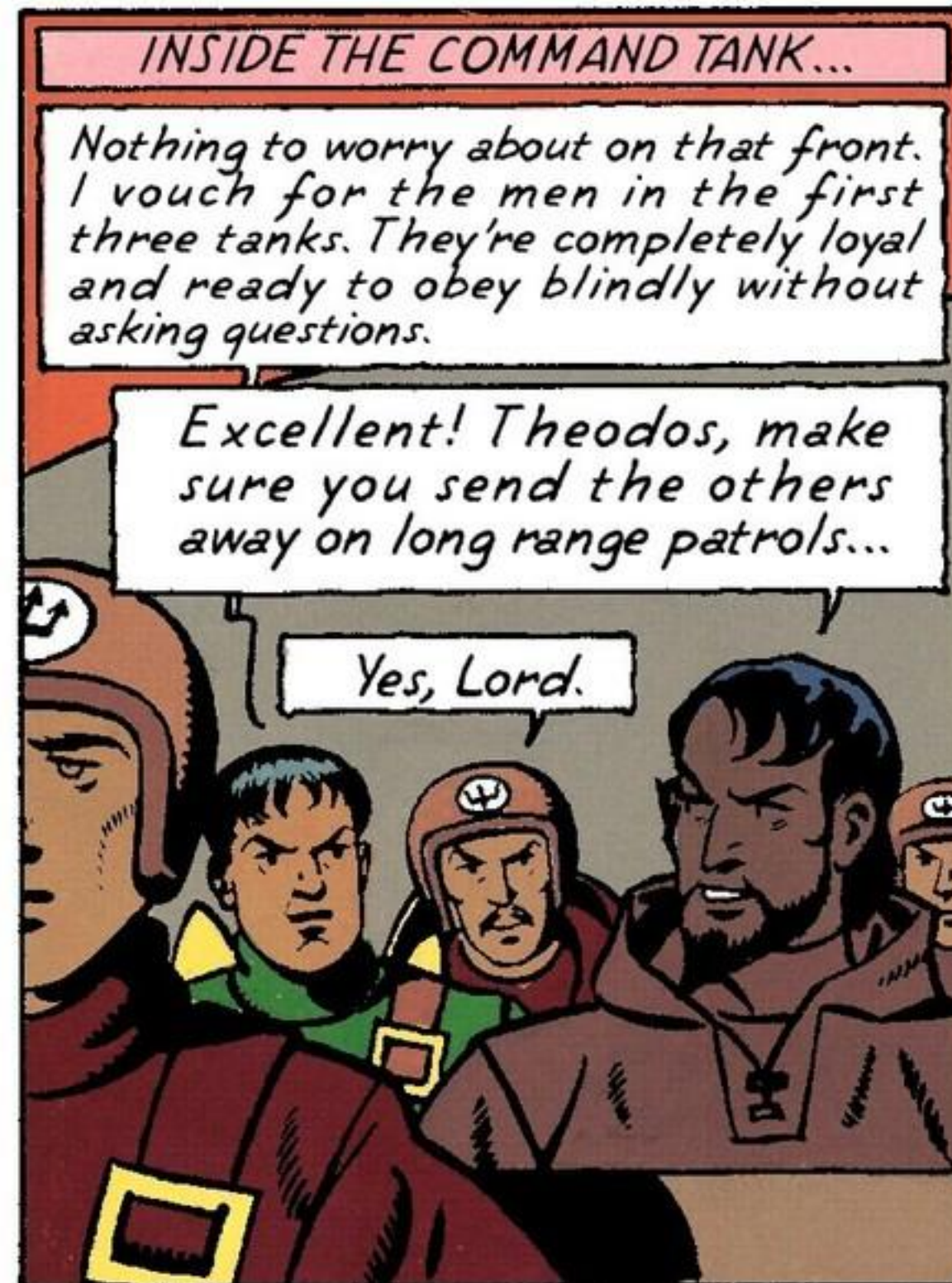
There's movement at the entrance to the bridge!...







IT IS THE EXPEDITION LED BY MAGON: FIVE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC REPULSION TANKS WITH NUCLEAR ENGINES, CARRYING A HUNDRED PHULOS IN FULL WAR GEAR, FLY JUST ABOVE THE GROUND AT HIGH SPEED!

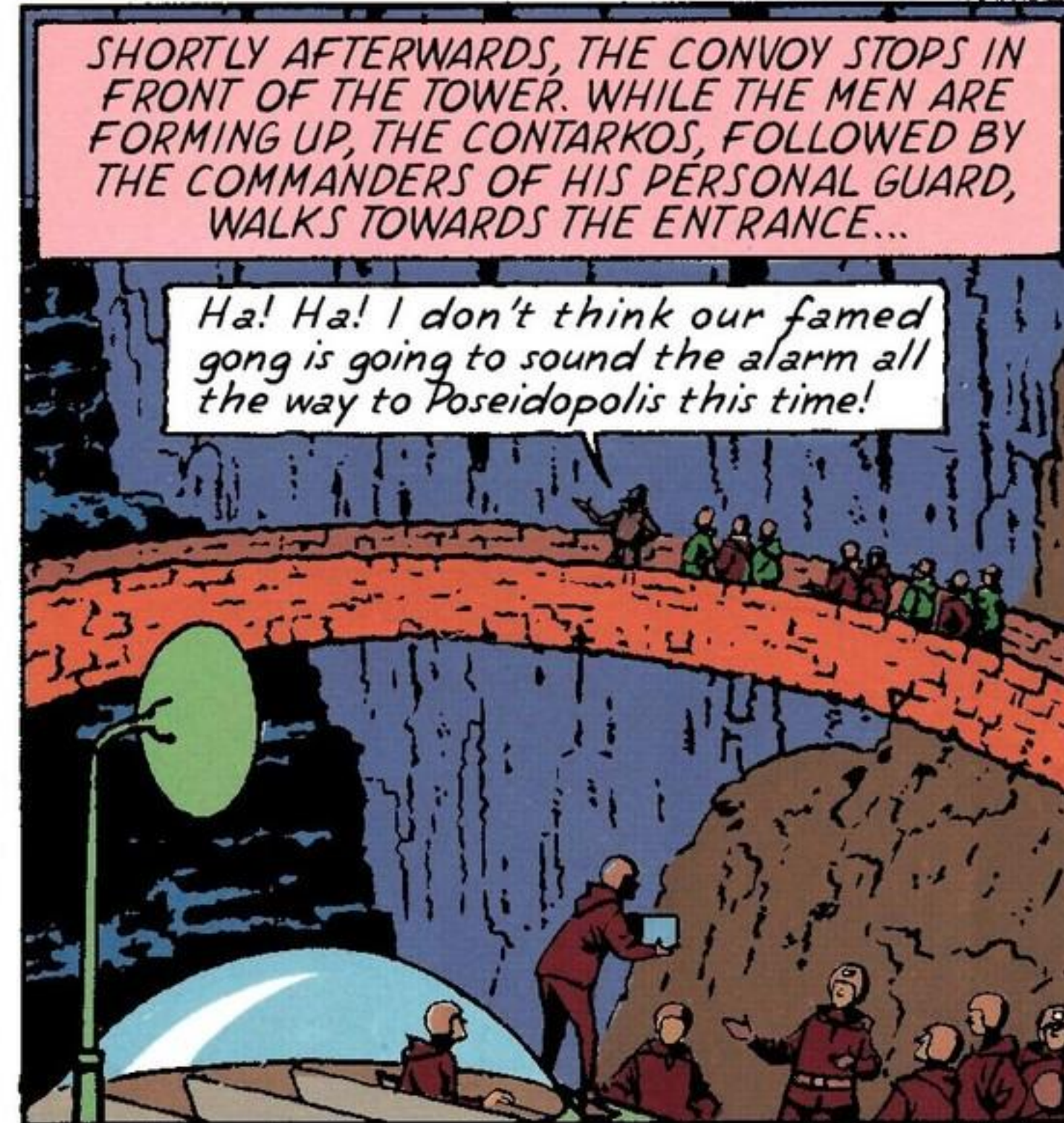


INSIDE THE COMMAND TANK...

Nothing to worry about on that front. I vouch for the men in the first three tanks. They're completely loyal and ready to obey blindly without asking questions.

Excellent! Theodos, make sure you send the others away on long range patrols...

Yes, Lord.



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE CONVOY STOPS IN FRONT OF THE TOWER. WHILE THE MEN ARE FORMING UP, THE CONTARKOS, FOLLOWED BY THE COMMANDERS OF HIS PERSONAL GUARD, WALKS TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE...

Ha! Ha! I don't think our famed gong is going to sound the alarm all the way to Poseidopolis this time!



... AND SOON STEPS INTO THE GUARDROOM...

Here we won't be bothered.



Understood, then?... As soon as the loyalist troops are away, our men will take their prepared positions, with the goal of neutralising any troops coming from the capital. Theodos, Kafit, and 20 elite men, including 10 planos, will come with me to the other side... Should anything unexpected happen, we'll have enough firepower to stand up to anyone. A large number of the latest weapons has been stockpiled here. Every slab of...

BUT HE IS CUT OFF BY A SHOUT...

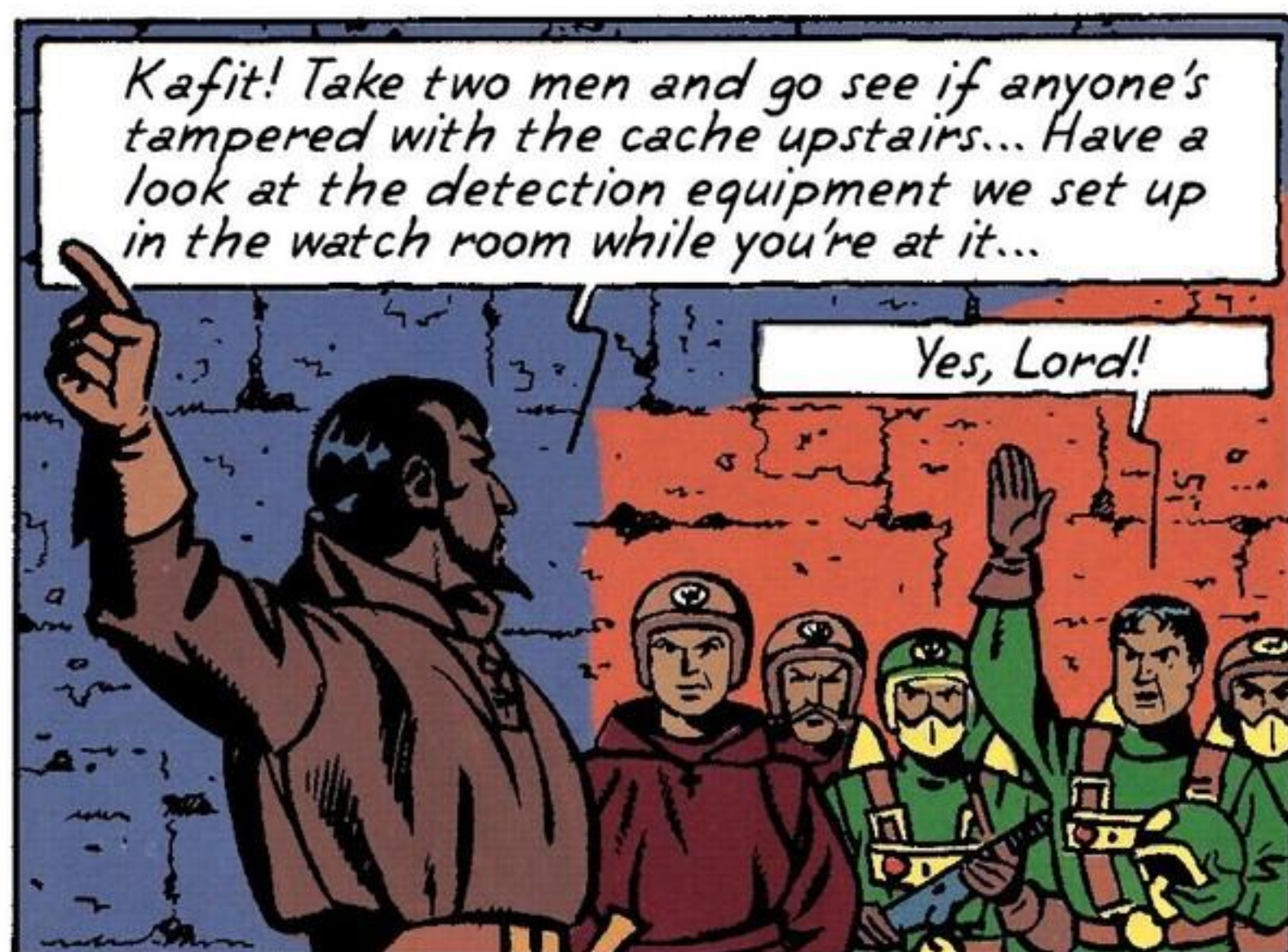
Contarkos! You must see this!!

What is it?!



THE MAN HAS JUST CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE DISINTEGRATOR OUR THREE FRIENDS UNFORTUNATELY LEFT WHERE THEY FOUND IT.

By Tartarus! What is this?!



Kafit! Take two men and go see if anyone's tampered with the cache upstairs... Have a look at the detection equipment we set up in the watch room while you're at it...

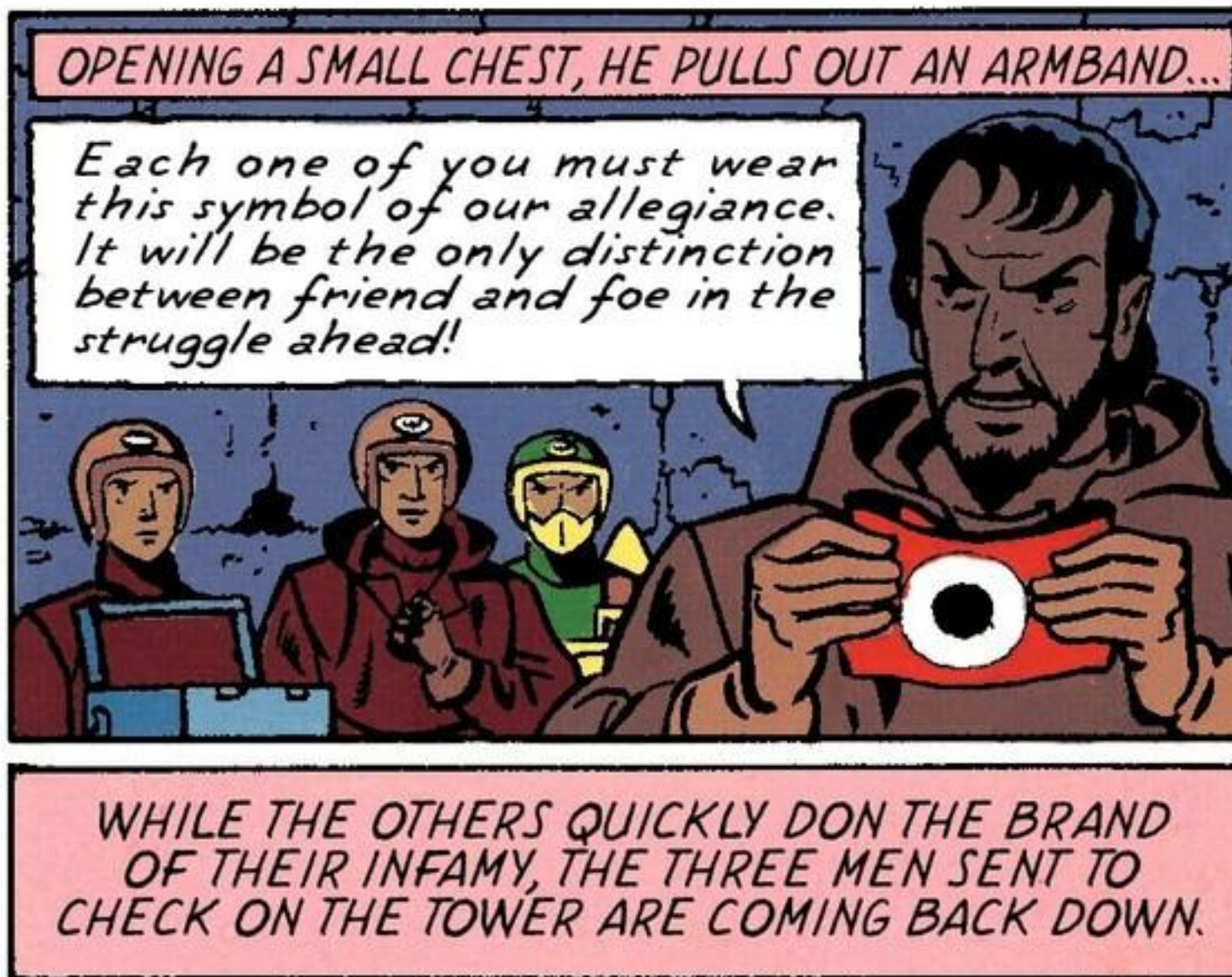
Yes, Lord!



JUST THEN, THEODOS COMES IN...

Your orders have been carried out. The unreliable elements have been sent away...

Very good. Before we get under way, though, we have one last formality to accomplish...



OPENING A SMALL CHEST, HE PULLS OUT AN ARMBAND...

Each one of you must wear this symbol of our allegiance. It will be the only distinction between friend and foe in the struggle ahead!

WHILE THE OTHERS QUICKLY DON THE BRAND OF THEIR INFAMY, THE THREE MEN SENT TO CHECK ON THE TOWER ARE COMING BACK DOWN.



Well, Kafit?

Nothing suspicious, Contarkos. One of the slabs was damaged and broke under the weight of the weapons.

Good. Let's go, then!



Oh, one last thing... Since it's always possible those barbarians might attempt some treachery, you and your planos will patrol ahead of my tank to detect any sign of an ambush.

As you order, Lord!



AND A FEW MINUTES LATER, SURROUNDED BY FLYING GUARDS, MAGON'S TANK ENTERS ARROW PASS...

After this business is concluded, we'll have to take Omegara by surprise. We can't let the garrison there raise the alarm. With the outpost in our hands, the road to the capital will be wide open!

And there's little risk that it'll resist. We'll have most of the weapons under our control, as well as the nuclear plant. Besides, our countrymen have gone soft from too much peace. They won't last long!

THE TANK TURNS A CORNER, AND THE GREAT BRONZE GATE THAT BARS THE ENTRANCE TO ATLANTIS APPEARS...

HAVING DISEMBARKED, MAGON LAYS HIS HAND ON ONE OF THE DISKS THAT ADORN THE DOOR. IMMEDIATELY, IT LIGHTS UP...

WITH THIS GESTURE, WHICH ACTIVATES A PHOTO-ELECTRIC CELL THAT IDENTIFIES THE FINGERPRINTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, THE GATE IS SET IN MOTION AND OPENS WIDE, REVEALING A DEEP CHASM...

Leave five phulos here. Make sure they keep their eyes peeled!

Yes, Lord!

THEN THE FLYING TANK AND ITS ESCORT CLEAR THE ABYSS AND ENTER THE FORBIDDEN ZONE.

THE CONVOY CAUTIOUSLY FOLLOWS THE ROAD LEADING TO THE ORICHALCUM WALLS. BUT, AS THEY ADVANCE DEEPER AND DEEPER, THE SURROUNDING AREA BECOMES EVER WILDER AND MORE HOSTILE, AND THE VIGILANCE OF THE FLYING INFANTRY ESCORT REDOUBLES.

We must be near the Colossal Head crossroad. I wonder...

AT THAT MOMENT, KAFIT SIGNALS OVER THE RADIO:

Tank, this is Kafit. Three men are waiting at the fork.

STANDING AT THE FOOT OF THE ENORMOUS MONOLITH THAT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL LEADING TO BARBARIAN COUNTRY, THREE IMPASSIVE WARRIORS ARE WATCHING THE ATLANTEANS' APPROACH.

Peace be upon you, mighty leader! We have orders to take you to our great King Tlalac!... But he requests you only take three companions with you.

Ha! I should have known...

Don't go, Lord!... It's a trap!

Too late! We can't turn back now. You'll stay here with the tank, ready to move in at the first sign of trouble. Kafit will escort me with his two best planos.

Yes, Lord!

Very well, lead on. But do not attempt to betray us, or else...

We do not speak twisted words, mighty leader!

WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THE WARRIORS START DOWN THE UNEVEN PATH, FOLLOWED BY MAGON AND HIS MEN.

AFTER A LONG TREK THROUGH THE IMPREGNABLE FIELDS OF ROCK THAT PROTECT THE BORDERS OF THE BARBARIAN KINGDOM, THE SMALL PARTY FINALLY COMES OUT INTO A KIND OF GRANITE CIRQUE, IN THE MIDDLE OF WHICH STANDS A MASSIVE TEMPLE.



What a great place for a trap!...

AT THAT MOMENT, THE HOARSE CALL OF A HORN SOUNDS OUT, SENDING ECHOES BOUNCING BETWEEN THE HIGH ROCK WALLS...



... AT THE SIGNAL, A HORDE OF ARMED WARRIORS LEAPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE ROCKS WHERE THEY'VE BEEN HIDING, SURROUNDING THE STUNNED ATLANTEANS COMPLETELY.



Curses!

ALREADY, THE VISITORS ARE READY TO SELL THEIR LIVES DEARLY, WHEN TLALAC, FLANKED BY HIS BODYGUARDS, APPEARS AT THE TEMPLE DOOR...



FOLLOWING THE INVITATION, MAGON AND HIS MEN ENTER THE SANCTUARY. THE HEAVY DOOR SLAMS SHUT BEHIND THEM...



Take this seat, Magon.

AND THE KING, HAVING SEATED HIMSELF, IMMEDIATELY GOES ON...

Let's not prevaricate! I've seen through your schemes, Magon!... A providential visitor has taught me everything you'd so carefully kept from me... Now I know all about the munificent wealth of the surface cities, the beauty and size of the vast empires you intend to conquer with your accursed weapons, once I and my people have allowed you to seize power. I also know that the kingdom you've promised me as a reward for my services is nothing more than an island lost in the middle of the ocean, where my people and I would be nothing more than captives dependent on your goodwill. Ha! Ha! Everything is changed, now! No more fool's bargains! To me all the lands west of the ocean, to you the ones to the east. These are my conditions!... What say you to this?...



VISIBLY SHAKEN, MAGON STRUGGLES TO ANSWER.



You... you seem strangely well informed, Tlalac... May I know the man who counselled you so well?...

Of course!

AT A GESTURE FROM THE KING, A MAN STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS WHERE HE WAS STANDING. IT IS OLRİK! OLRİK THE MERCENARY! OLRİK, WHO WAS BELIEVED DEAD, SWALLOWED FOREVER BY THE CAULDRONS OF HELL!!!



A surferer!?! Another one?!?

Tell your story to this lord...

TURNING TO MAGON, THE ADVENTURER DECLARES:



It was providence, really, that dropped me here at the same time it was saving my life; this way, I am now able to support and harmonise the great projects of your two people... For I am, myself, a great leader rejected by men, and I'm only waiting for an opportunity to take revenge on them! So, rest assured that you can count on me without reservation! First of all, though, you'll have to rid us of two surfacers who, I've heard...

AT THAT, MAGON, WHO'S FINALLY REGAINED HIS COMPOSURE, INTERRUPTS HIM...



If you're talking about Blake and Mortimer, be at ease. They died a few hours ago—thanks to me!

Ah! This warms my heart, because...

SUDDENLY, SHOUTS SOUND THROUGH THE DOOR, ACCOMPANIED BY FRANTIC POUNDING...



BOOM BOOM BOOM.

ENRAGED, TLALAC LEAPS TO HIS FEET AND ROARS:

Who dares!?... I want the interloper put to d...

BUT HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO FINISH HIS SENTENCE, FOR THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN TO LET A DISHEVELLED, HAGGARD MAN STUMBLE IN, HELD BY TWO WARRIORS... IT IS KAFIT, LIEUTENANT OF THE CONTARKOS...

Magon! We are betrayed!

AT THE SIGHT OF HIS MAN, MAGON LETS OUT A SHOUT...

Kafit!?!?

BEWILDERED, THE VARIOUS ATTENDANTS HAVE NO TIME TO RECOVER, FOR AT THAT MOMENT A COMMANDING VOICE RINGS OUT:

No one move, or these three men are dead!...

THE ONE WHO HAS JUST UTTERED THESE WORDS IS NOW STANDING BEHIND THE ROYAL PARTY, HIS WEAPON POINTED AT THE CONTARKOS, WHILE HIS TWO COMPANIONS HOLD THE SHOCKED KING AND OLRIK AT BAY...

Hands up! And don't try to go for your pistol!

And now, everybody out! Except these three! Go on! Move faster!

WHEN THE ORDER IS NOT FOLLOWED QUICKLY ENOUGH, A BLAST OF FIRE STRIKES THE GROUND, SENDING THE BARBARIANS AND KAFIR INTO A HURRIED RETREAT...

They're gone! Blake, Mortimer, hurry! Close the door and lock it!

AT THESE WORDS, TLALAC, MAGON, AND OLRIK HAVE VERY DIFFERENT REACTIONS...

What? It can't be!!! That voice?...

Confound it! Them!!!! Always them!!!

May the fire of Huehuetotl strike you down!... What's the meaning of this?

Yes, Magon, you guessed right! I'm Prince Icarus! My companions and I overpowered and stripped the men you sent up the Gong Tower, where we were hiding—and from where we heard everything! I know of your treachery now, you knave! You, whom the basileus trusted! You've betrayed Atlantis to satisfy your own ambition!... But you will be punished in proportion to your crime!

Empty threats, Icarus. You'll never leave this place!

Yes, you fool! You've trapped yourself! This temple has no other exit and my men surround it! We will sacrifice you and your two accomplices to our gods!

BUT, POINTING AT A STAIRCASE LEADING TO THE CRYPT, ICARUS REPLIES:

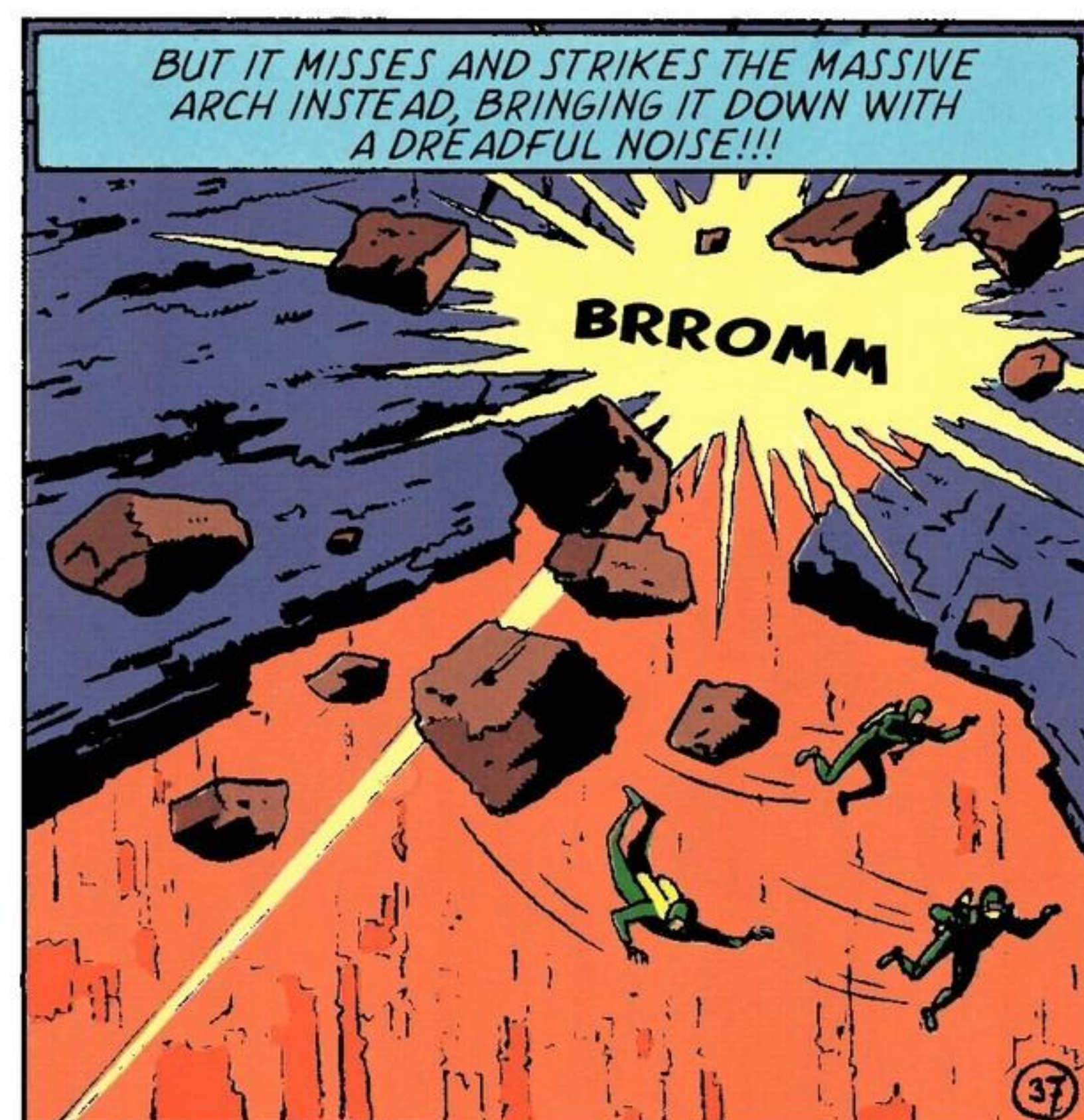
Enough chatter. Get down there now. And move it!

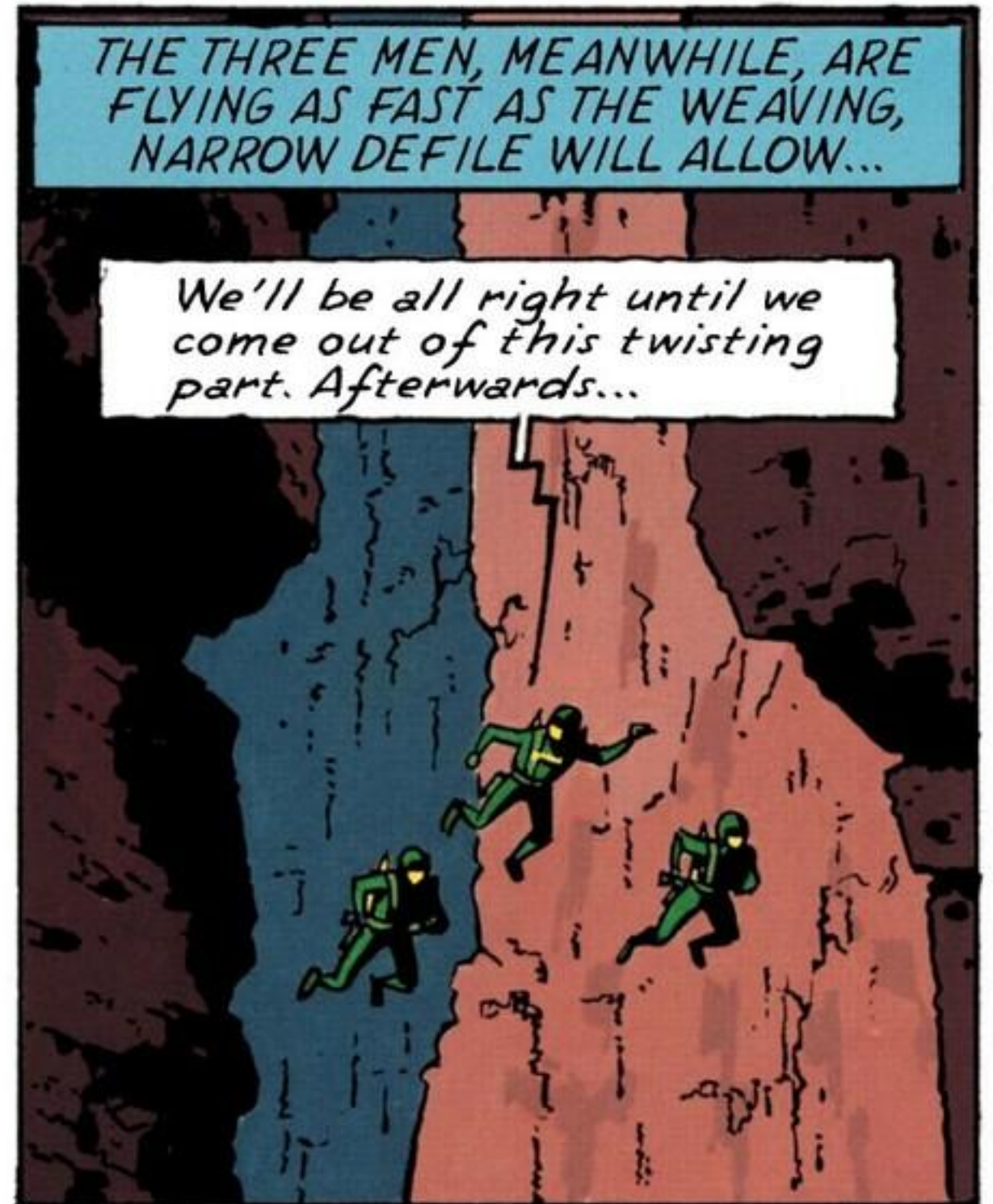
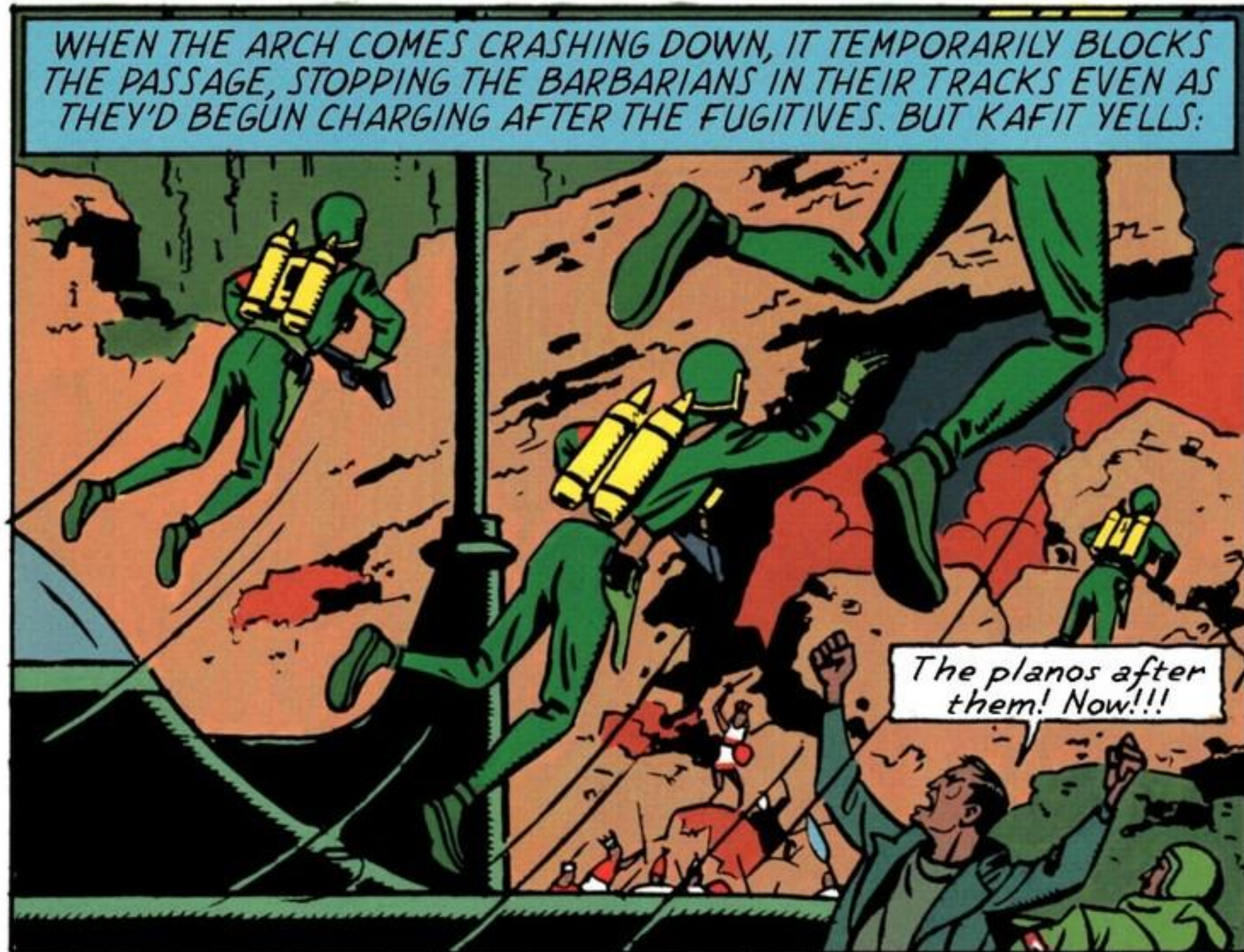
UNDERSTANDING THAT RESISTING WOULD BE FUTILE, THE THREE MEN COMPLY, CONTAINING THEIR RAGE...

We'll meet again!

WORKING TOGETHER, ICARUS, BLAKE, AND MORTIMER PUT BACK THE HEAVY SLAB THAT CLOSES THE OPENING.

Now that this is done, let's see about finding a way out of here!





Yes, the barbarians! But also, alongside them, the flying tanks. No need to tell you we won't stand up to their powerful disintegrators! Here's the situation: The basileus must be warned of Magon's treason as quickly as possible... My plan is destroyed. Leave me here, and...

Never!

Never!

Thank you, my friends. I'm touched by your gesture. But it would cost us everything! Let one of you, at least, attempt to get through. In the meantime, my companion and I will do our best to draw our pursuers away...

Well, if Mortimer agrees to stay with you, I'd like to try it.

Jolly good, Francis! I'm sure the two of us will be fine.

Very well, Captain. Listen, then...

When you reach the Great Gate, give this hand signal and say "missi baka!" to the phulos on guard, then just go through. It means "special mission." As for the rest, do as circumstances dictate... But, by Zeus, do not tarry!

Understood!

BLAKE TAKES OFF IMMEDIATELY...

Goodbye, my friends!

May the gods protect you! And remember: "missi baka!"

Good luck, Blake!

JUST IN TIME! THE CAPTAIN IS BARELY OUT OF SIGHT WHEN THE BARBARIANS APPEAR...

We'll give them a volley to make them think we intend to remain dug in here; then we'll go through a narrow crack that cuts across the defile where the tanks won't be able to follow us...

THE PRINCE PUNCTUATES HIS WORDS WITH A WELL-AIMED BURST. AS HE HAD PLANNED, THE BARBARIANS FALL BACK IN DISARRAY...

... ALLOWING THE TWO MEN TO LEAVE THEIR PRECARIOUS POSITION DISCREETLY...

Hold on tight!

It won't take long. The entrance is a stone's throw away...

THEY BARELY HAVE TIME TO FLY INTO THE CRACK BEFORE THE TERRIBLE FIRE FROM A FLYING TANK STRIKES THE SPOT THEY'VE JUST VACATED...

We're saved!

Let's not start celebrating just yet!

INDEED, FOR AS SWIFT AS THEIR ESCAPE WAS, THEY HAVE BEEN SIGHTED...

The devils! They've tricked us! I just saw them disappear down that crack!!!

By Tantaros! Let's move!!

FLYING OVER THE RUBBLE, THE TANK TAKES POSITION IN FRONT OF THE NARROW GAP, BUT...

Damn it! We can't go in!

Fine, then!... Just blast everything in sight! Hurry!!!

THE DEADLY RAY BEGINS TO SWEEP THE ROCK WALLS, AND THEY COLLAPSE WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR, BLOCKING THE PASSAGE ALMOST ALL THE WAY TO THE CEILING.

BRRROOM

AT THAT MOMENT, MAGON, PALE WITH RAGE AND HUMILIATION, ARRIVES ON THE FIRST TANK, ALONG WITH TLALAC AND OLRİK.

Well?

They're down there, Contarkos. This time we're rid of them for good!

Be careful, Lord! The two surfacers are crafty, and...

You may be right. Radio, take this message...

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THOUGH, BLAKE ARRIVES AT THE GREAT GATE...

Let's be careful.

THREE PHULOS ON DUTY AT THE ENTRANCE ARE LISTENING TO THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF THE BATTLE...

The shooting's stopped...

I'd like to know what happened!

Hey! Look, a planos!

UNWARY, THE GUARDS WATCH BLAKE CROSS THE CHASM.

Probably a messenger.

We'll soon know.

Missi baka!

Hey, friend!...

THEY ATTEMPT TO QUESTION HIM AS HE APPROACHES, BUT INSTEAD OF SLOWING DOWN, HE GIVES THE HAND SIGNAL AND THE PASSWORD, AND...

... ZIPS AWAY AT TOP SPEED, LEAVING THE THREE MEN BEHIND, TAKEN ABACK...

Er... Looks like he's in a big hurry!

I wonder if...

JUST THEN, THE POST'S RADIO CRACKLES TO LIFE. IT'S MAGON'S TANK CALLING...

Hello!... Yes, Beta 2 here... Arrest anyone that shows up? But... A planos on a special mission just came through... What?

THE UNEXPECTED ANSWER SENDS THE CONTARKOS INTO APOPLECTIC RAGE.

By Tartarus!!! Alert the tower! I want him found! I want him stopped at any costs! If he reaches Omegaara, all is lost!!! But I need him alive!

Immediately, Lord!

I knew it!

REALISING THAT HE MUST ACT QUICKLY AND DECISIVELY IF HE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE HIS PLANS RUINED, MAGON DECIDES TO HEAD BACK TO POSEIDOPOLIS RIGHT AWAY.

I'm leaving without delay. Every second counts! Tlalac, you and your warriors must be ready tomorrow at the ninth hour, at the arranged place!

I will be. And woe betide the Atlanteans!

As for me, I'll take care of the other two!

AND WHILE MAGON AND TLALAC DEPART IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, OLRİK SPRINGS INTO ACTION...

Search the crack... and make sure no one can reach the border without being seen. Go!

OLRIK IS RIGHT. ICARUS AND THE PROFESSOR HAVE SURVIVED THE VOLLEY OF DEADLY RAYS. INSTEAD OF DUCKING BELOW THE FIRE, THEY FLEW TO THE TOP OF THE CANYON AND THUS AVOIDED BEING CRUSHED BY THE COLLAPSING ROCKS.

You heard what they said: The attack on Atlantis is set for tomorrow at the ninth hour! If one of us hasn't managed to raise the alarm by then, the empire is lost!... I know a byroad to get back to the border, but it's such dangerous terrain to cross that I hesitate to take you through there!

Let's go, Prince! Anything's better than being trapped here like a rat in a hole!

WHILE OUR TWO FRIENDS PREPARE TO FACE NEW PERILS, BLAKE HAS REACHED THE SACRED GONG TOWER. TWO TANKS ARE PARKED NEAR THE BRIDGE, AND THE PILOT OF THE FIRST ONE BUSTLES AROUND HIS VEHICLE.

No one aside from the pilots!... The troops must be away on mission... If I could get close to... What's this!?

A VOICE SUDDENLY COMES OUT OF THE TANK'S RADIO THROUGH THE SPEAKER...

Hello! Hello! Calling all tanks! Orders are to stop a lone planos heading towards Omegaara... He's a dangerous spy and must be taken alive!

By the gods!

THE MAN HURRIES BACK TO THE HATCH, BUT JUST AS HE'S ABOUT TO ENTER THE TANK, HE GLIMPSES BLAKE DIVING UPON HIM LIKE A HAWK!

TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE, THE GUARD HAS NO TIME TO MAKE A MOVE...

A MASTERFUL UPPERCUT KNOCKS HIM OUT AND HE ROLLS DOWN ONTO THE ROAD. UNFORTUNATELY...

... THE ATTACK IS SEEN BY THE OTHER TANK'S PILOT, WHO HAS ALSO RECEIVED THE MESSAGE AND IMMEDIATELY STARTS HIS VEHICLE...

BLAKE HAS SLID INTO THE COCKPIT. AFTER A MOMENT OF DISORIENTATION, HE MANAGES TO TAKE OFF...

Ah, finally!

BUT HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO PICK UP SPEED. ALREADY THE OTHER TANK IS AHEAD OF HIM, BLOCKING HIS WAY...

Heavens!

... WHILE HALF A DOZEN PHULOS, ALERTED AS WELL, STORM OUT OF THE TOWER SHOUTING...

Aim for the stabilisers!

THREATENED FROM BOTH SIDES, BLAKE GOES FOR BROKE. HE PULLS HARD ON THE CONTROLS, AND THE TANK REARS AND FAIRLY LEAPS OVER ITS OPPONENT, TEARING OFF ITS SUPERSTRUCTURES, INCLUDING THE RAY EMITTER...

THROWN OFF BALANCE, THE TANK OVERTURNS, AND A GIGANTIC FLAME SHOTS OUT, CREATING A WALL OF FIRE BETWEEN BLAKE AND THE PHULOS.

EVEN THOUGH HIS OWN TANK HAS SUSTAINED SERIOUS DAMAGE IN THE CRASH, THE CAPTAIN KEEPS GOING. GUIDED BY THE RELAYS THAT LINE THE ROAD, THE VEHICLE ROCKS AND SWERVES ITS WAY ONWARDS AT HIGH SPEED.

I won't hold out for long with so much shaking! Maybe if I try to call Omegaara?...

UNFORTUNATELY, THE TRANSMITTER HAS BEEN DISABLED...

It won't work! I have to...

JUST THEN, A QUICK GLANCE BEHIND HIM REVEALS THAT HE'S BEING CHASED...

Already!?!

TURNING HIS GAZE FORWARD AGAIN, HE NOTICES OTHER TANKS HEADING TOWARDS HIM...

Too late!!

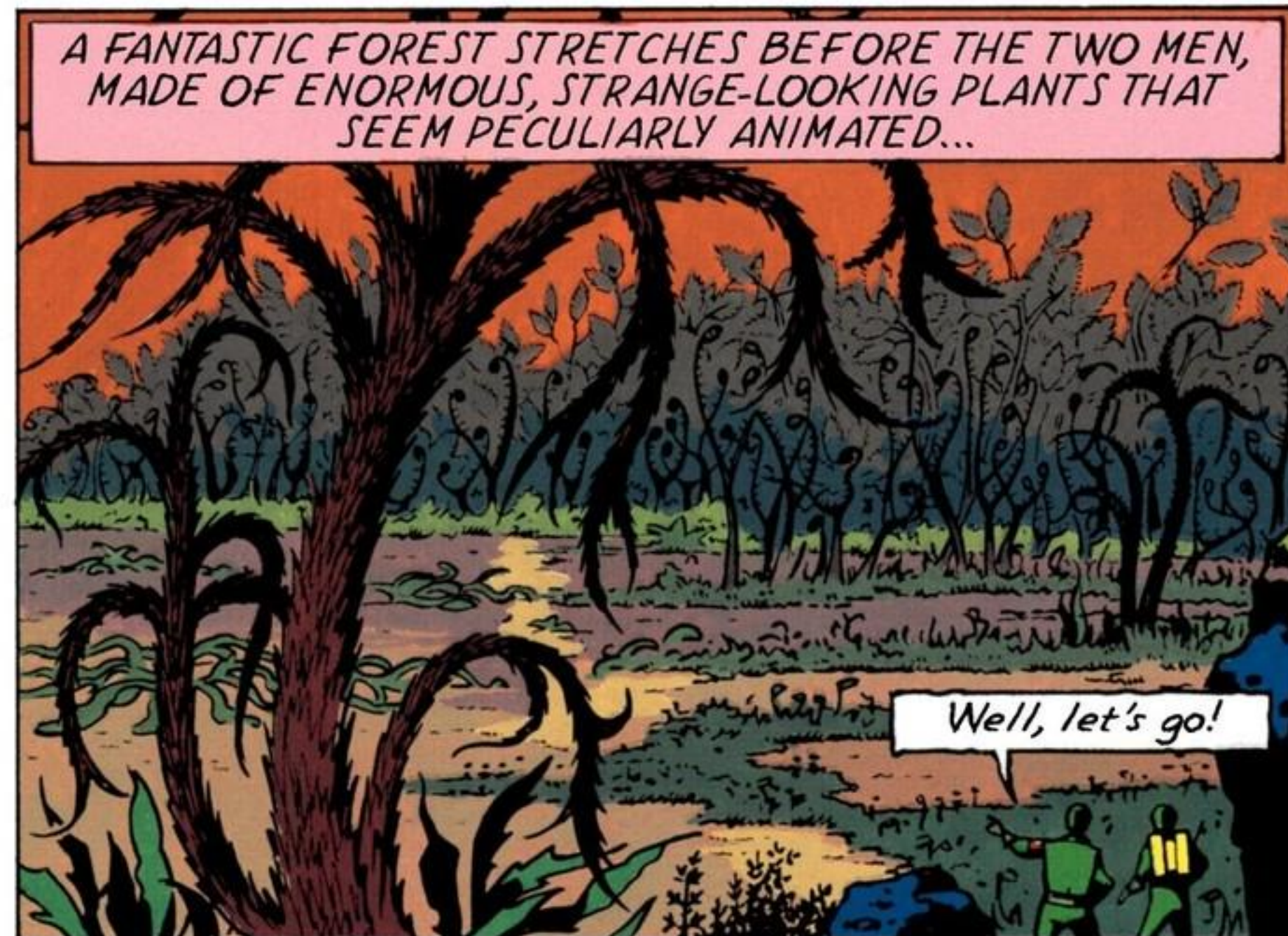
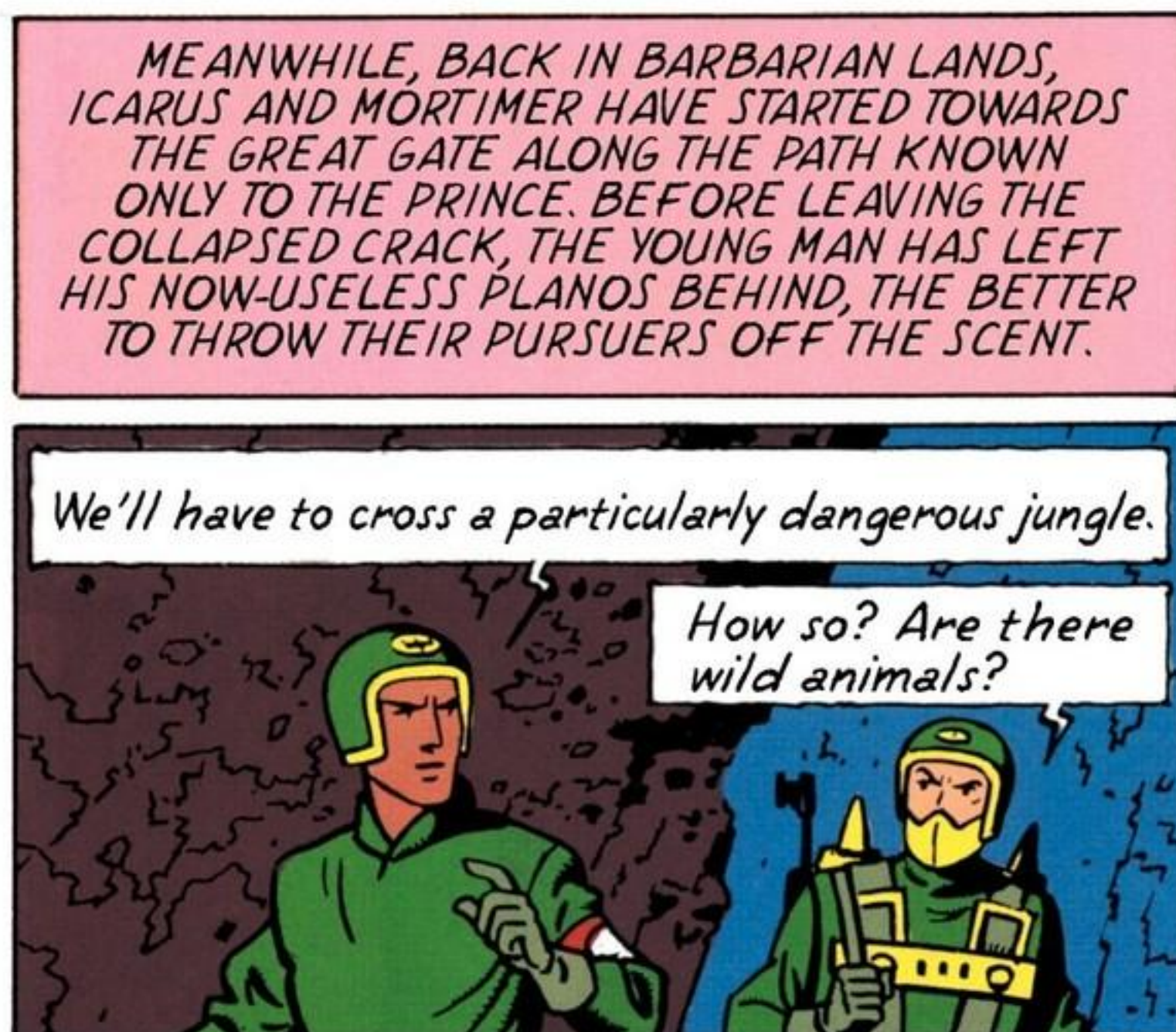
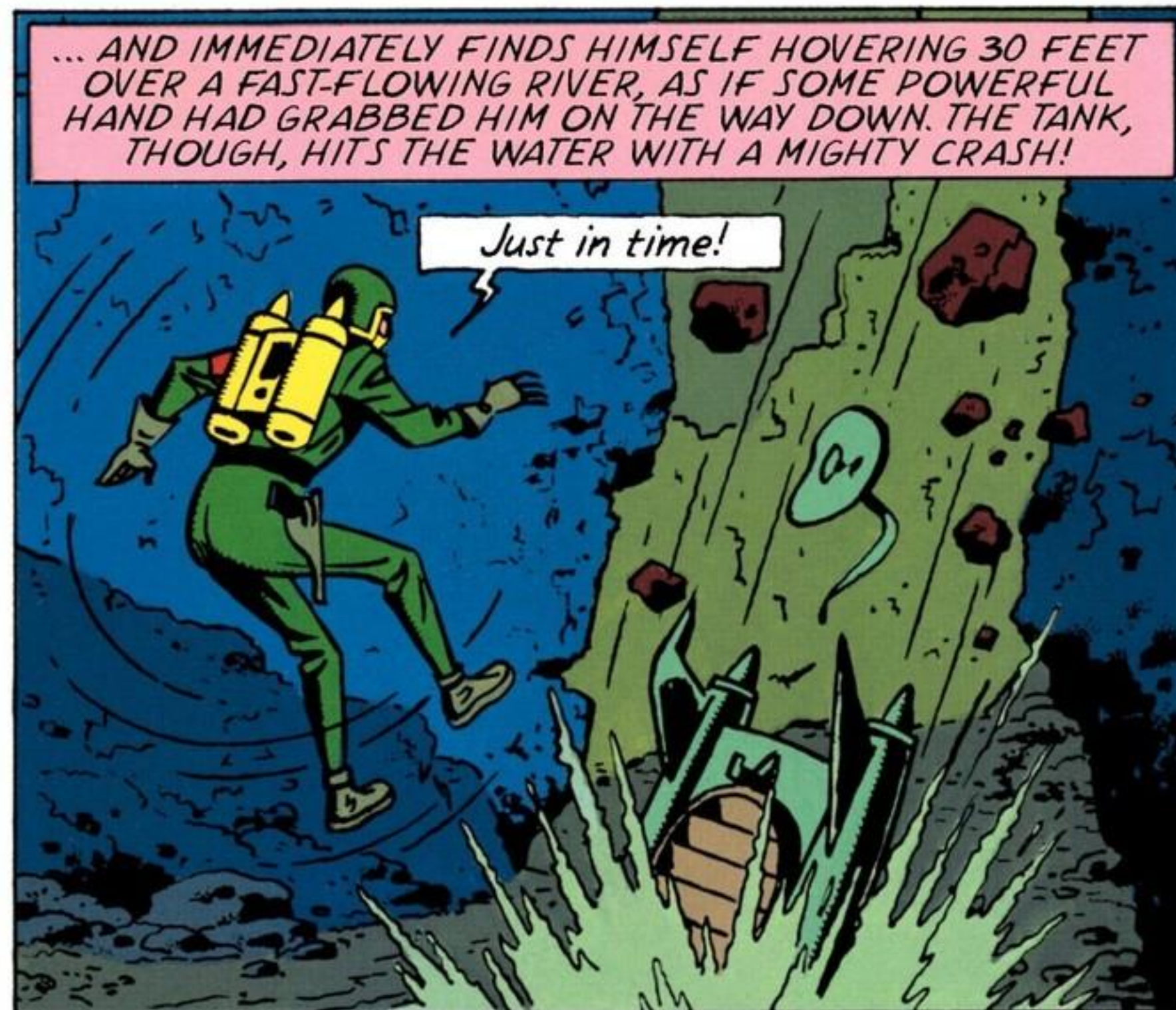
THE CAPTAIN ATTEMPTS TO SLOW DOWN IN ORDER TO FIGHT BETTER BUT SUDDENLY REALISES THAT HE HAS LOST CONTROL OF HIS MACHINE. AFTER ONE LAST VAULT, THE TANK SLAMS INTO A PYLON...

... KNOCKS IT DOWN, AND NOISILY TOPPLES INTO THE RAVINE BORDERING THE ROAD!

OUR UNFORTUNATE FRIEND IS THROWN INTO THE AIR THROUGH THE OPEN COCKPIT!

By Zeus! What a tumble!!!

He must be in bits!







NEAR PANIC, MORTIMER FEVERISHLY CASTS ABOUT FOR SOMETHING TO USE WHEN HIS GAZE ALIGHTS ON A WIDE, FLAT STONE STUCK IN THE TRAIL'S EMBANKMENT...

Ah! There!



... HE GRABS IT AND, WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF DESPAIR, BEGINS HACKING AWAY AT THE PLANT'S LEAFSTALK UNTIL HE FINALLY SEVERES IT.

Got it!!!



A VISCOUS SUBSTANCE OOOZES FROM THE CUT, AND THE DEADLY LOBES PULL APART, FREEING THEIR PRISONER.

Thank goodness he's alive!!!

I'm wrecked!!



MORTIMER HURRIES TO PULL HIS COMPANION ONTO THE TRAIL, DUBIOUS REFUGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CARNIVOROUS JUNGLE...

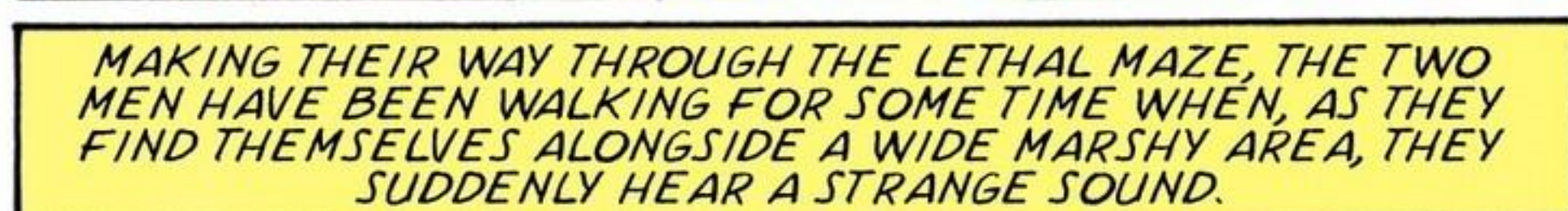
What a nightmare!!



SOON, THEIR COMPOSURE REGAINED, THE TWO FRIENDS TAKE STOCK...

What can we do now? No weapons and the planos is gone! No point in getting to that canyon under these conditions... We don't have the means to cross it!

True. Let's try to get to the Colossal Head instead. We'll figure out what we want to do there...



MAKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE LETHAL MAZE, THE TWO MEN HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR SOME TIME WHEN, AS THEY FIND THEMSELVES ALONGSIDE A WIDE MARSHY AREA, THEY SUDDENLY HEAR A STRANGE SOUND.



Did you hear that?!...

It seems to be coming from the right!



ADVANCING CAUTIOUSLY THROUGH THE VEGETATION BORDERING THE PATH, THEY PEER ACROSS THE MARSH AND SEE A BARBARIAN STRUGGLING TO STAY AFLOAT...

Heavens!

A barbarian? Here!?!...



HAVING CAUGHT SIGHT OF OUR FRIENDS, THE UNFORTUNATE MAN URGENTLY CALLS OUT TO BEG THEM...

Mercy, my lords! Help me!... And I swear, by Hunab Ku, I will forever be your faithful slave!!!



WITHIN SECONDS, ICARUS HAS HIS BELT UNDONE AND, WITH MORTIMER'S ASSISTANCE...

He swore... Besides, we can't let him die like this...

Yes, let's get him out of there!



... HE THROWS IT TO THE POOR WRETCH WHO GRABS ONTO IT...

Catch!



HE IS QUICKLY PULLED OUT OF THE MUD...

Hold on!



... AND COLLAPSES, EXHAUSTED, AS SOON AS HE REACHES SOLID GROUND...

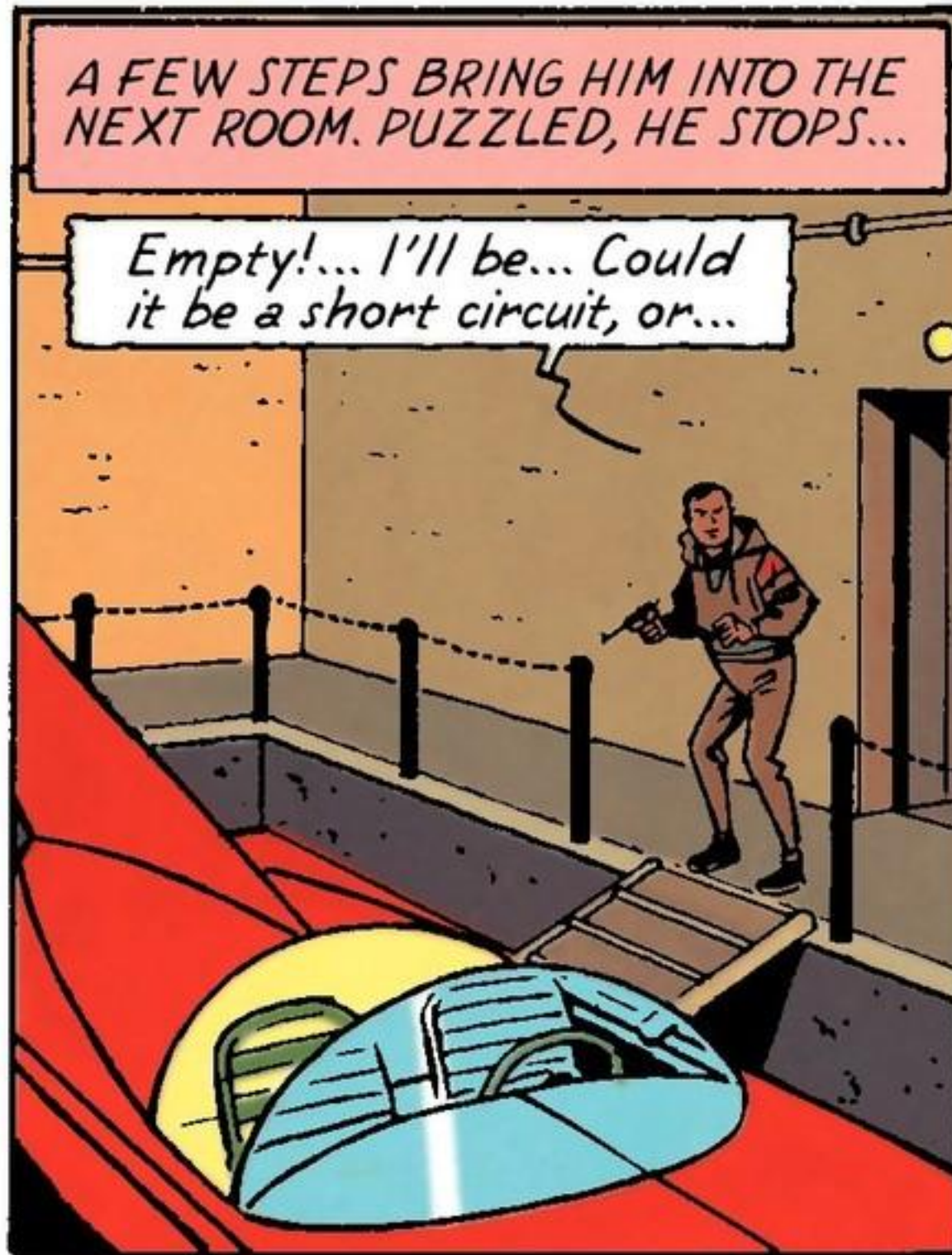
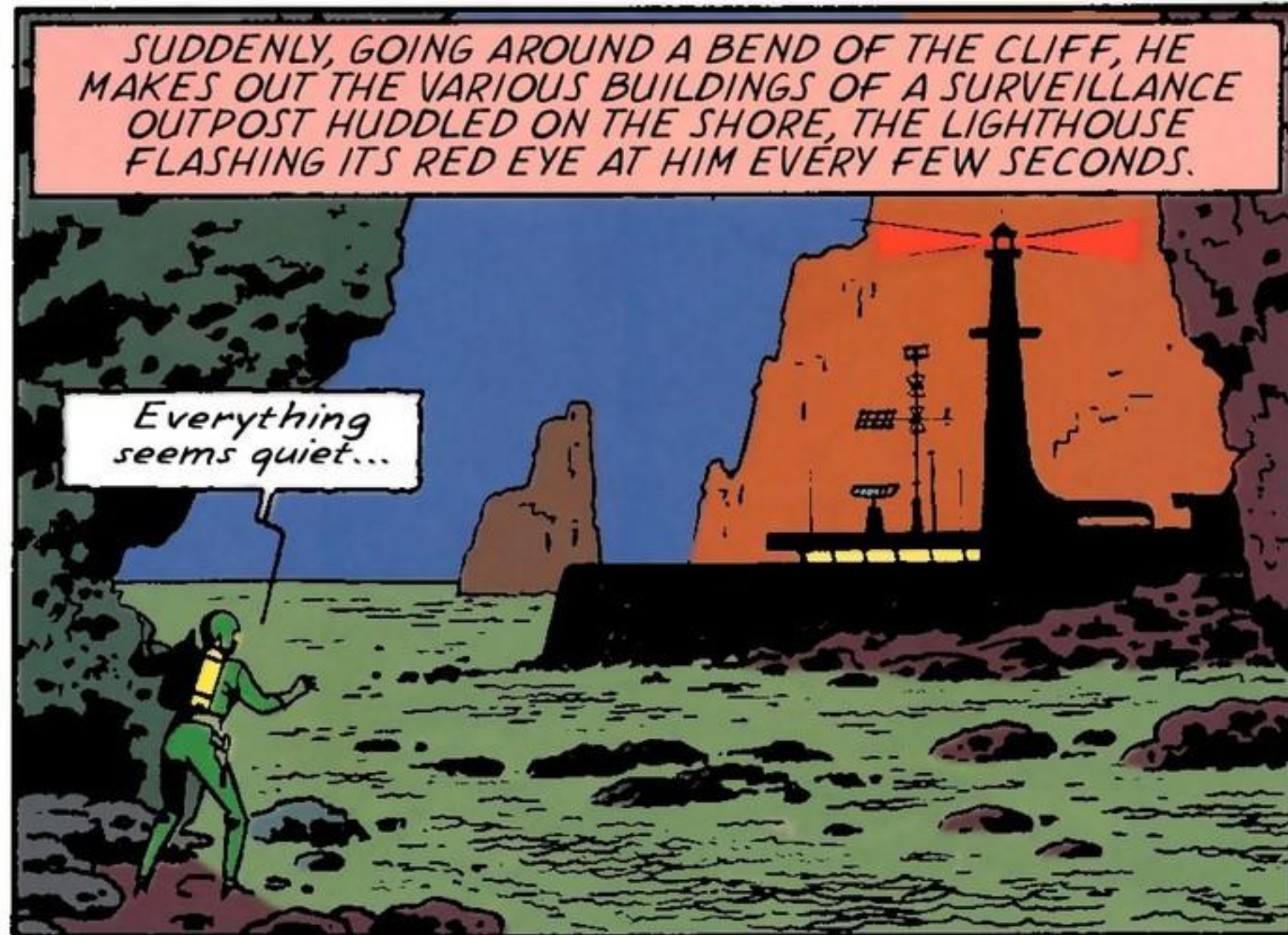
Who are you? And what were you doing in this place your people fear so much?

I will tell you, Lord!



My name is Kisin, and I was part of the party sent to look for you under the orders of the surface lord. When we reached the Forbidden Forest, the men refused to enter it, citing the gods' orders. But the surfacer flew into a terrible rage and, under threat of the worst torture, he ordered my brother and me and two other warriors to explore this accursed place. Two of our companions were crushed by the serpent-tree, and it was while I attempted to save my poor brother from drowning that I, too, fell into the swamp... Oh! A thousand curses on the stranger! And blessed will be the time of my vengeance!!

Well, that time is near, as long as you obey me. Listen—this is what we have to do...



THE GUARD OBEYS. BLAKE, HAVING IDENTIFIED HIM AS ONE OF MAGON'S MEN THANKS TO HIS ARMBAND, CONTINUES:

All right, get down into that boat, and no funny business!

UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WOULD BE USELESS TO RESIST, THE MAN BOARDS THE BOAT RIGHT AWAY, FOLLOWED BY THE CAPTAIN.

Get behind the wheel!

And now, head straight for Poseidopolis!

THE ENGINE ROARS TO LIFE. THE CUTTER GLIDES ALONG THE QUAY, LEAVES THE HANGAR, THEN ACCELERATES...

... AND IS SOON SPEEDING AWAY FROM THE COAST AND INTO A STRONG SEA, HARBINGER OF HEAVY WEATHER...

AND THE STORM DOES NOT TAKE LONG TO ARRIVE! THE CLOUDS THAT WERE FLOATING OVER THE WAVES SUDDENLY TURN INK-BLACK, AND A MUFFLED RUMBLING ERUPTS FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA...

AT THAT MOMENT, THE GUARD LETS OUT A JOYOUS CRY: LESS THAN A MILE AWAY, THE STRANGE SILHOUETTE OF A PATROL SHIP HAS JUST APPEARED...

IT'S CAPTAIN, UPON CATCHING SIGHT OF THE CUTTER, IS BAFFLED...

That's Hadad! He left his post? Whatever for?...

With the storm that's coming? Is he insane?!

INTRIGUED, THE CAPTAIN ATTEMPTS TO CONTACT THE GUARD BY RADIO.

Hello, Hadad? What's going on? Where are you going? Hadad!... Hadad!

BUT HADAD, ACUTELY AWARE OF THE GUN POINTING AT HIM, REMAINS SILENT.

Hadad! Are you deaf?!

Faster!!

Hmm... Something's not right here. Let's go after him... Full speed ahead!!

Full speed ahead!!

INCREASING ITS SPEED, THE PATROL SHIP FORCES ITS WAY THROUGH THE INCREASINGLY HIGH WAVES.

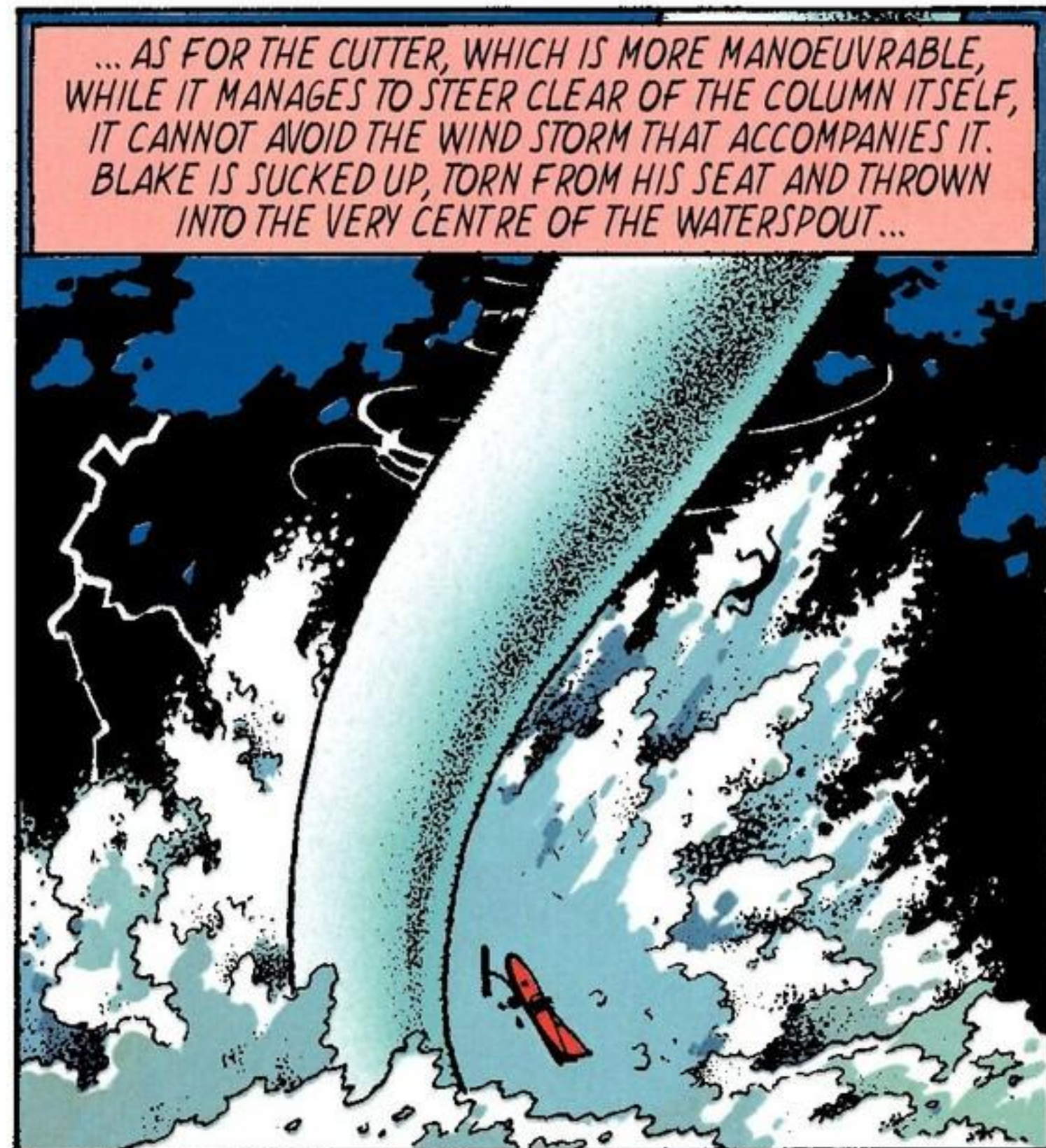
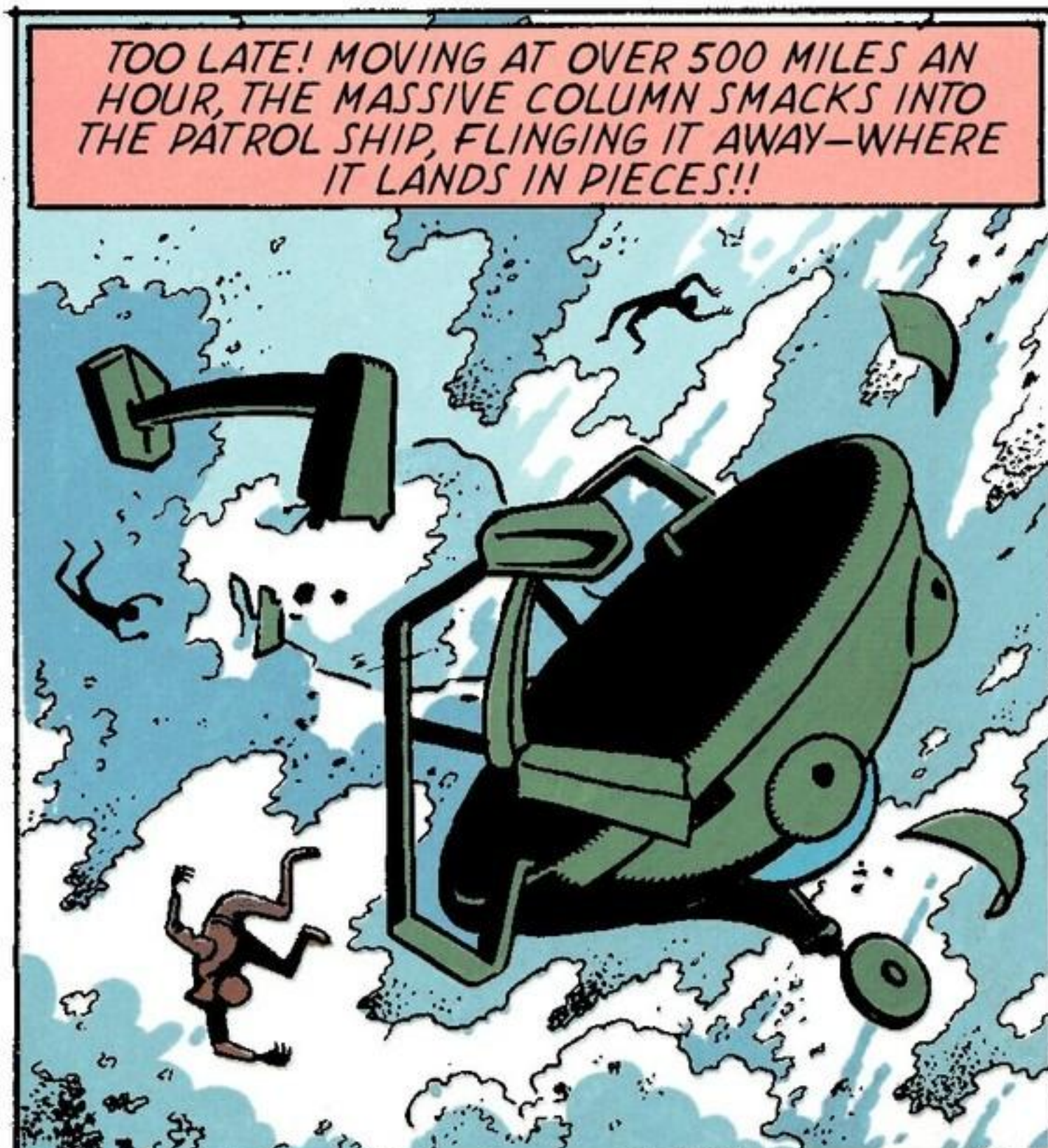
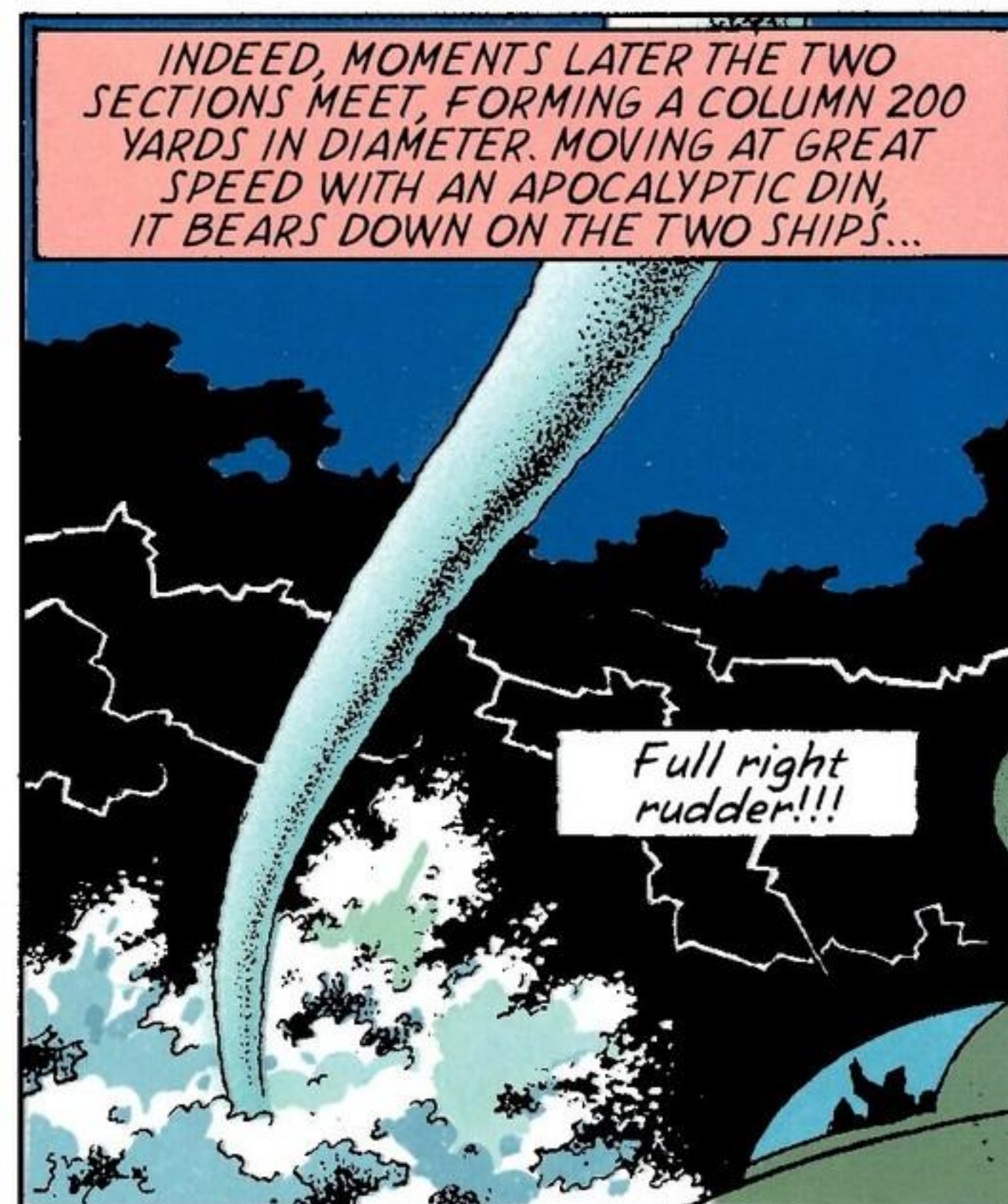
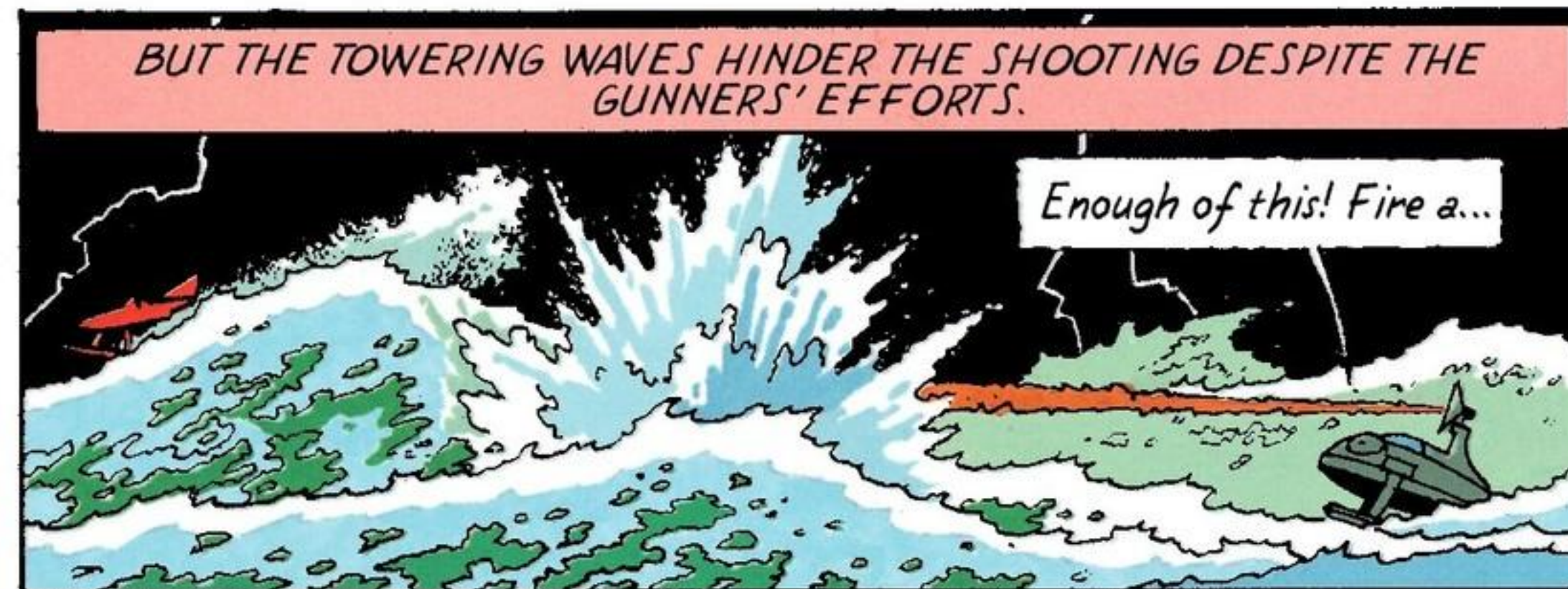
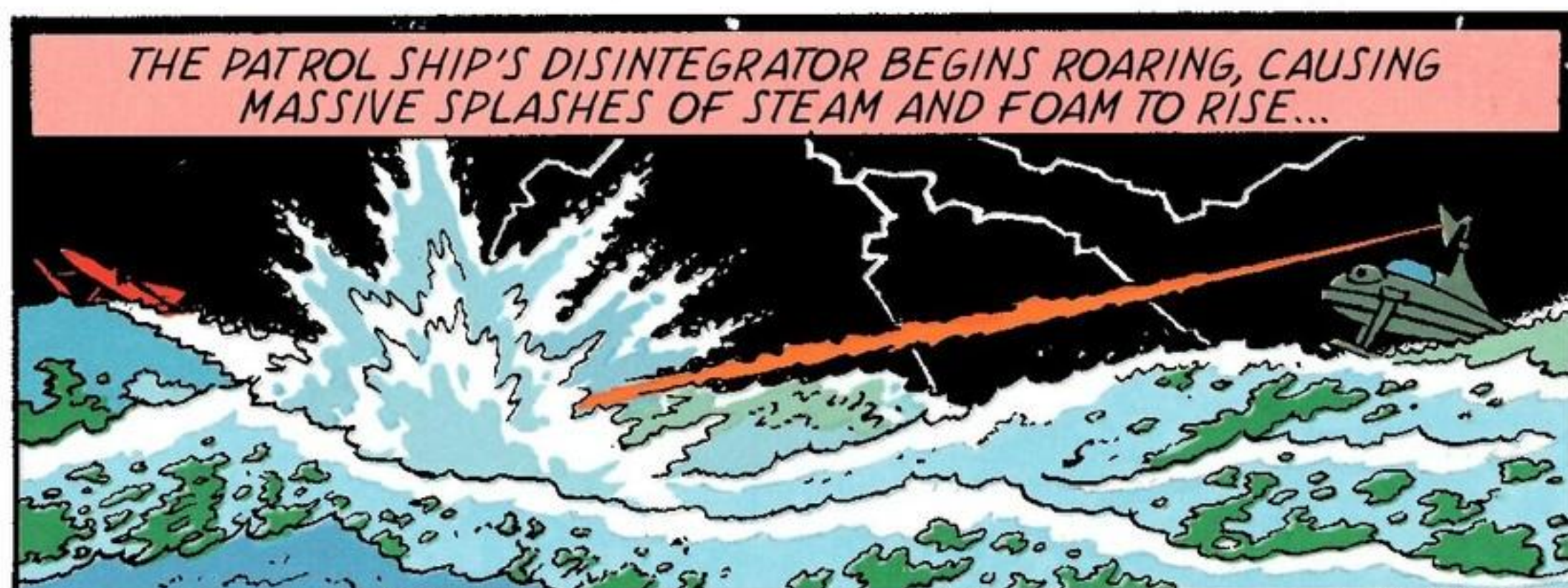
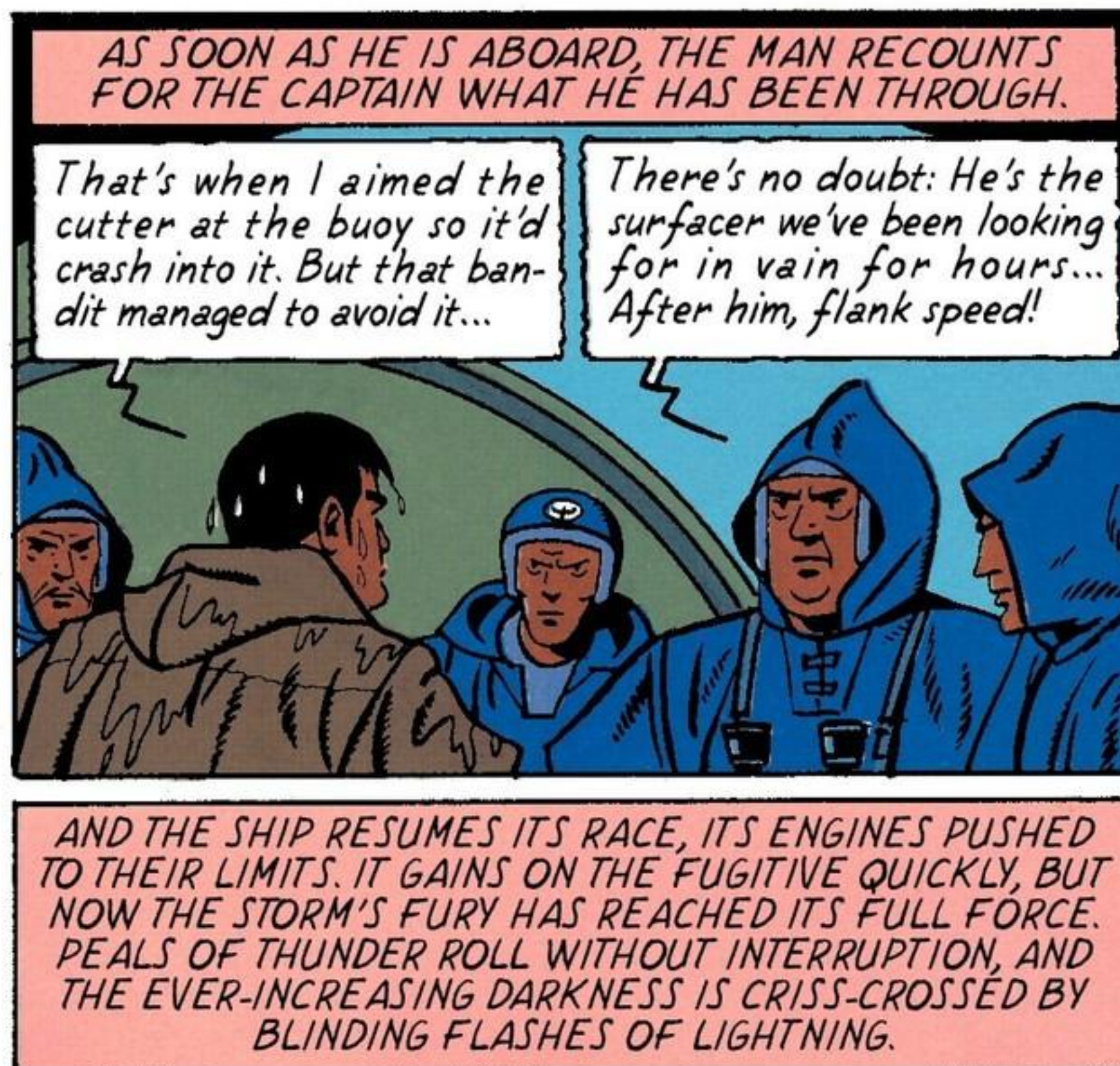
Faster!! Don't try to slow down!... If they catch up to us, my first bullet will be for you!

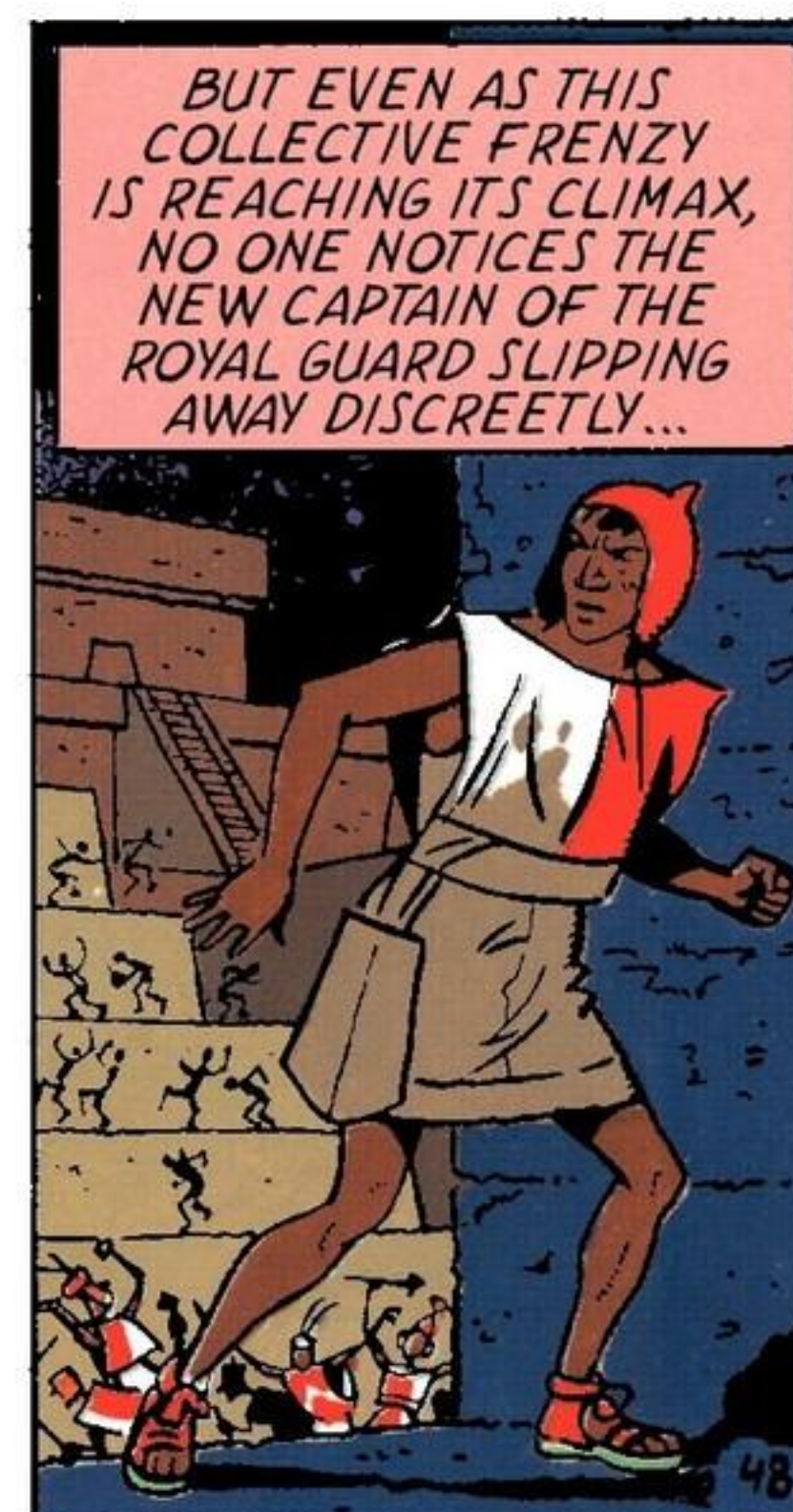
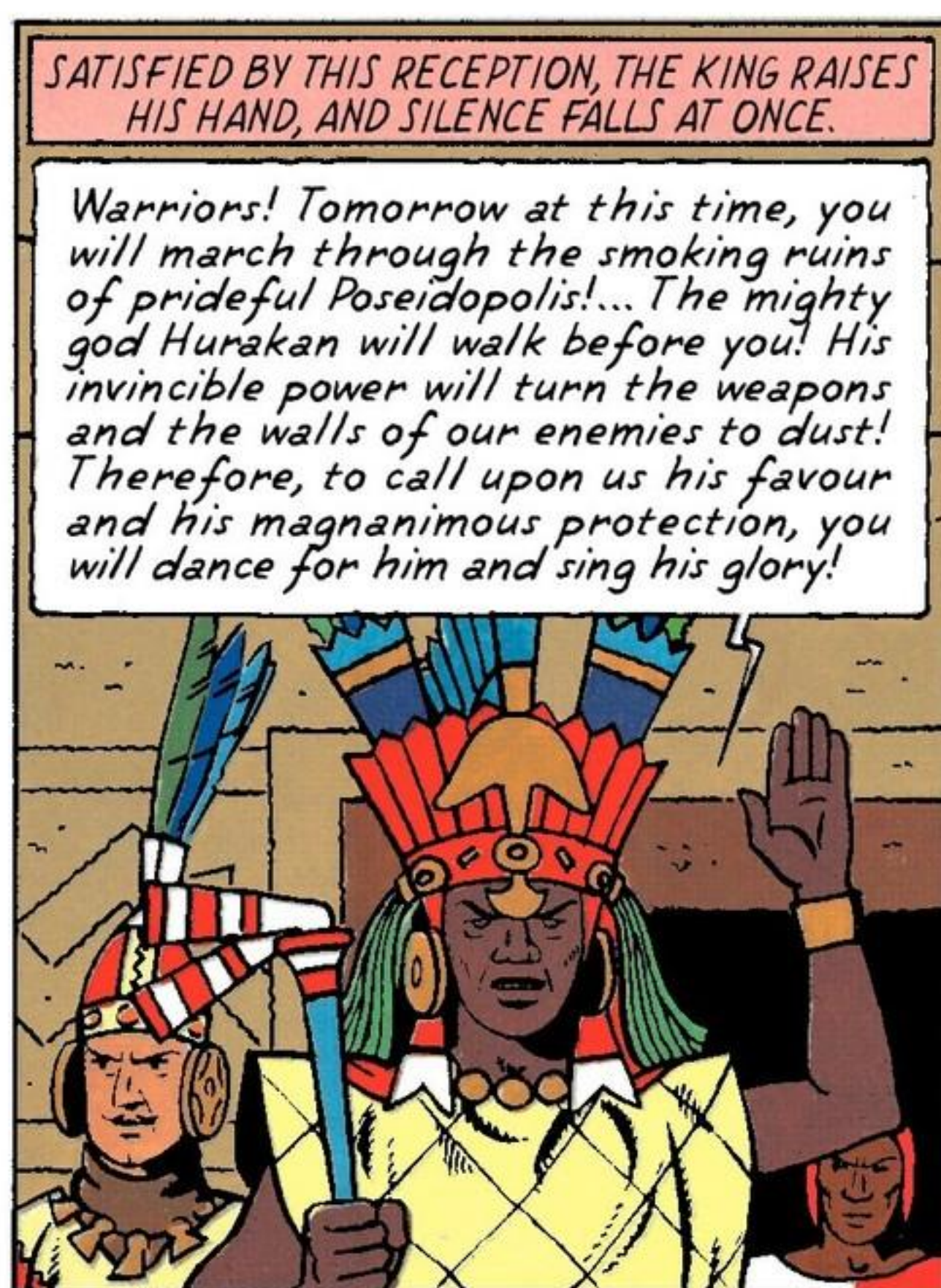
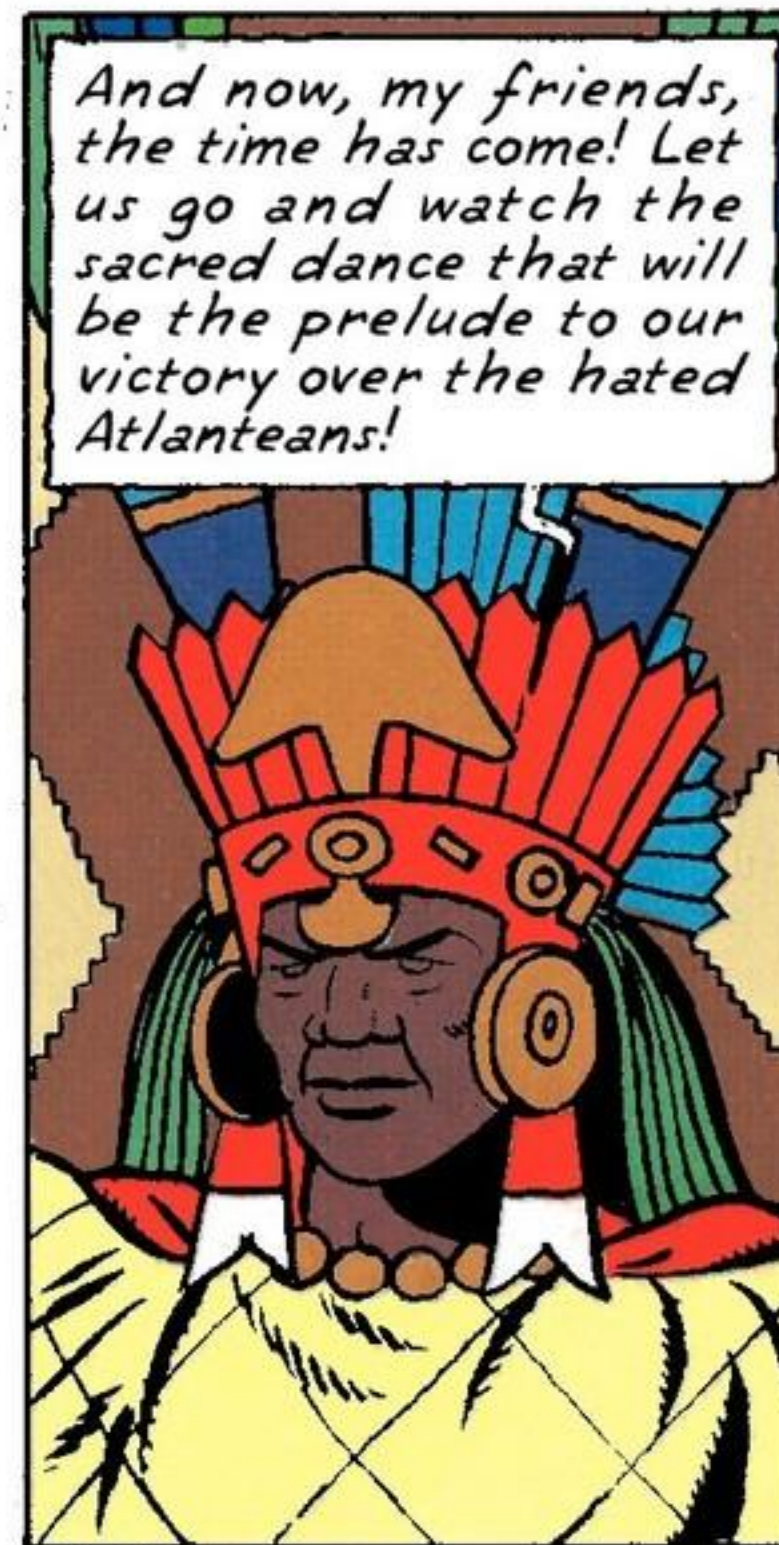
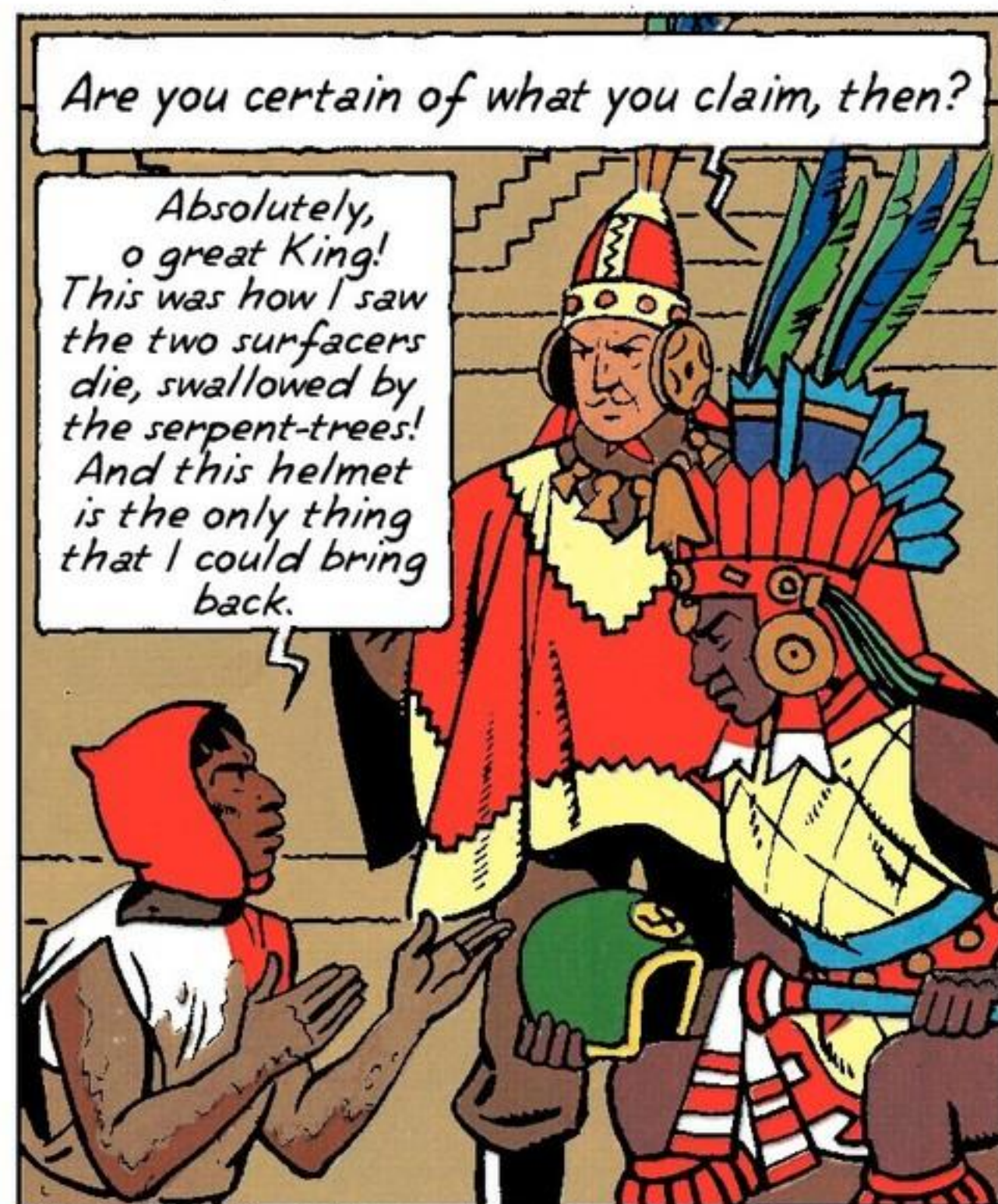
SEEING THEIR PURSUERS GAINING ON THEM, THE GUARD HATCHES A DESPERATE PLAN...

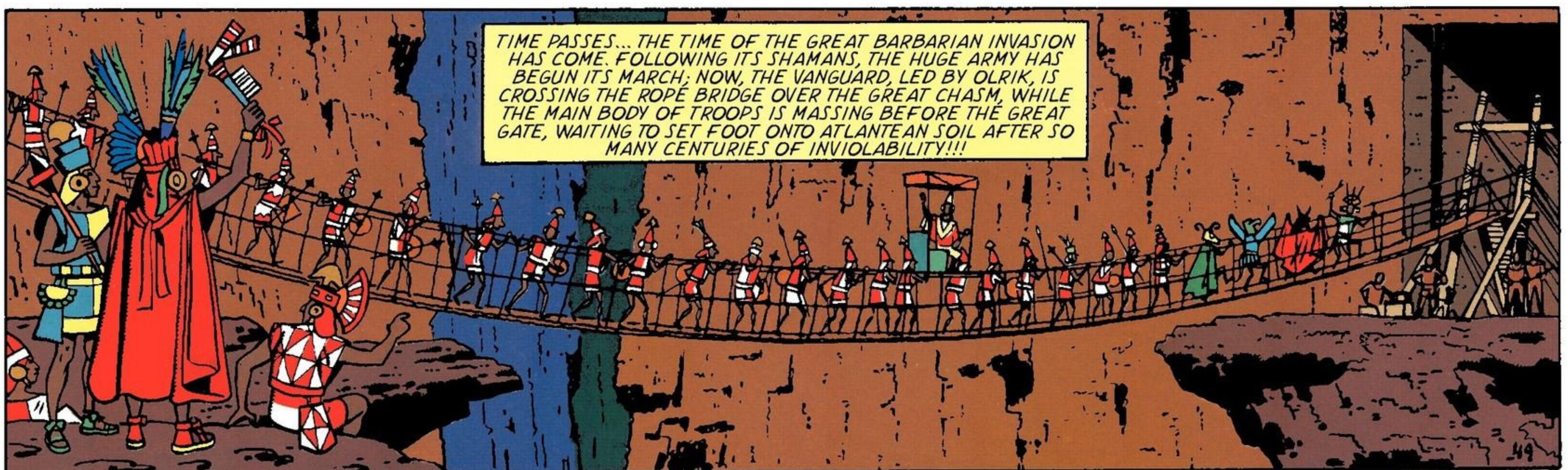
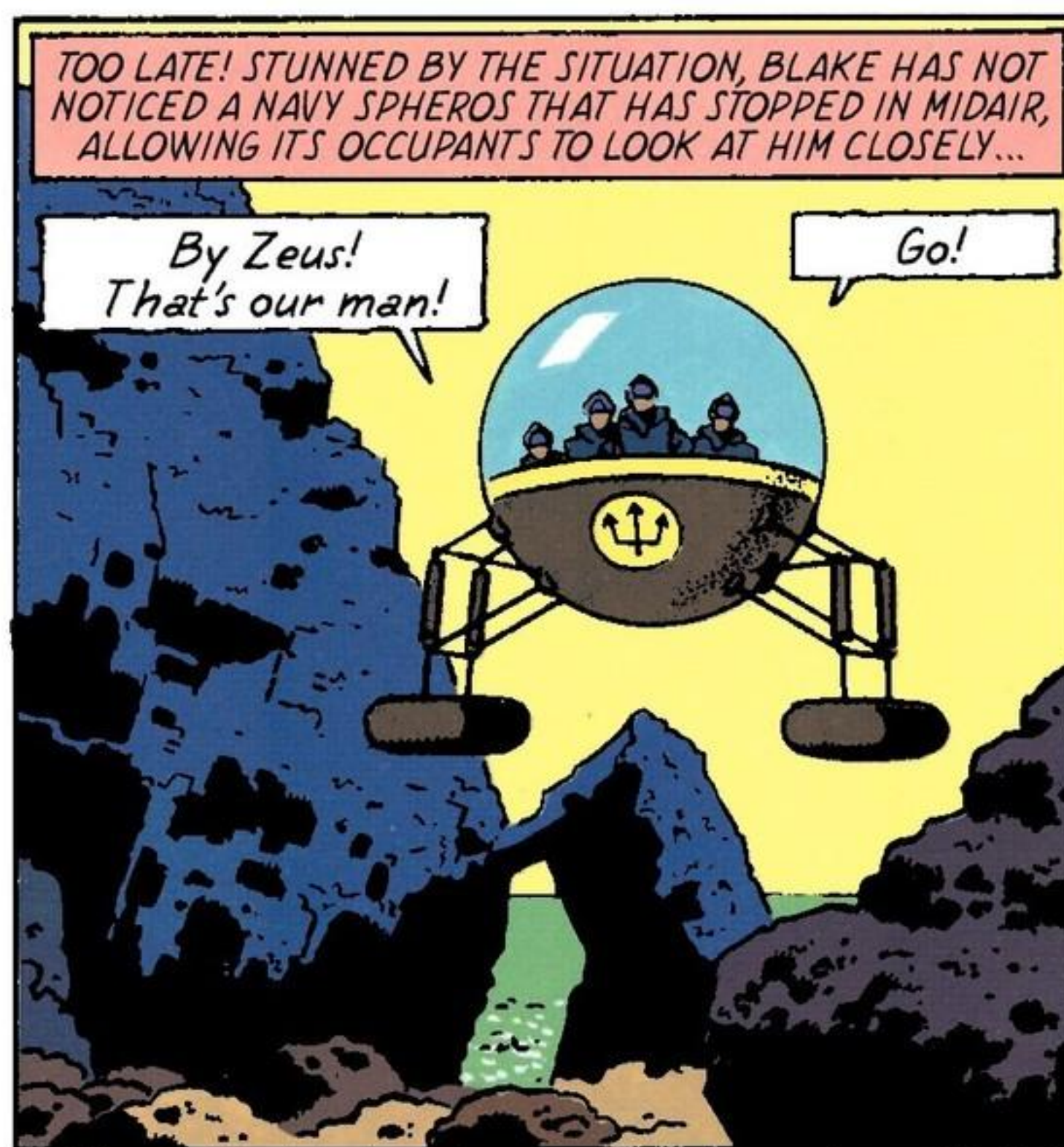
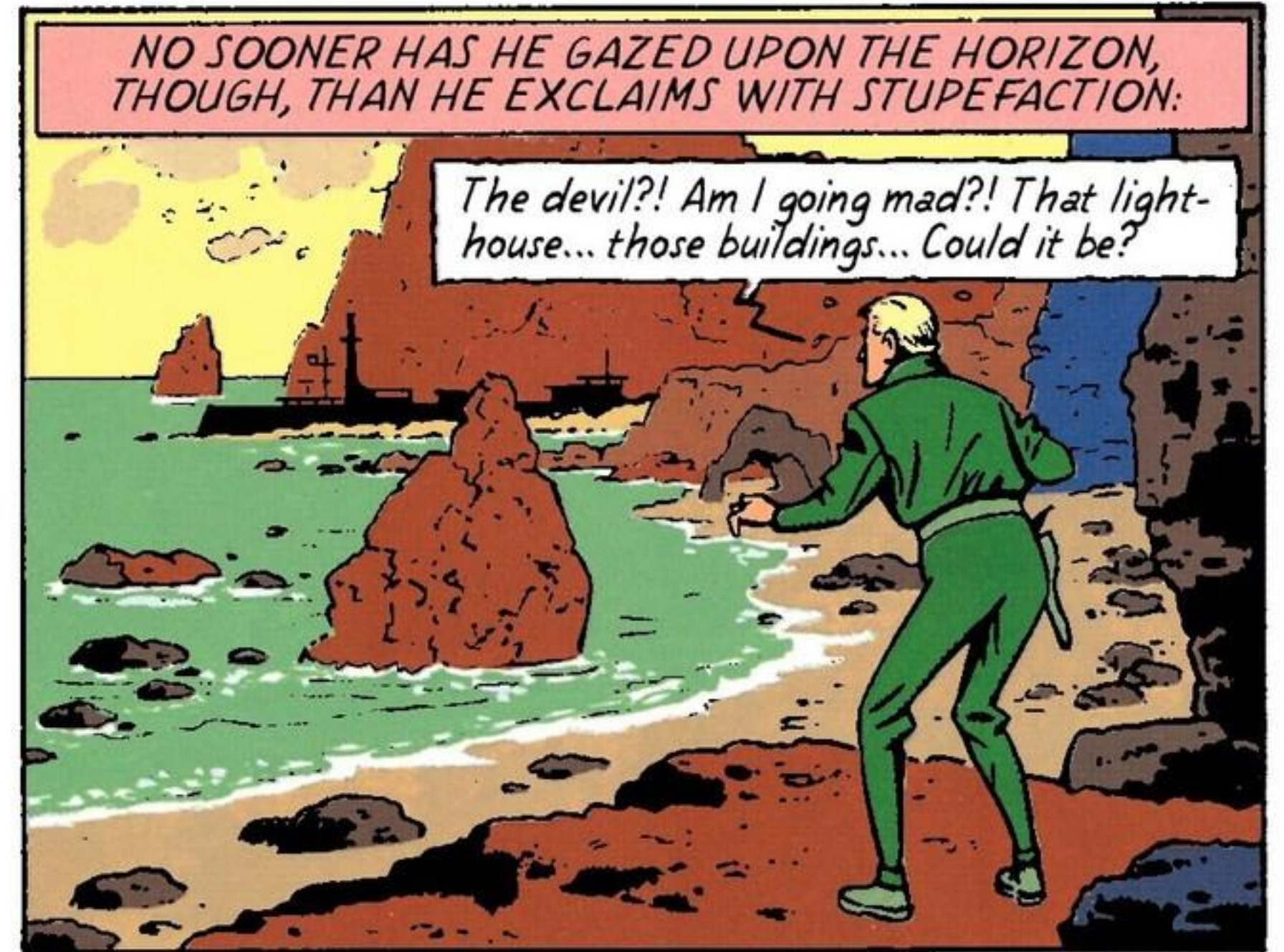
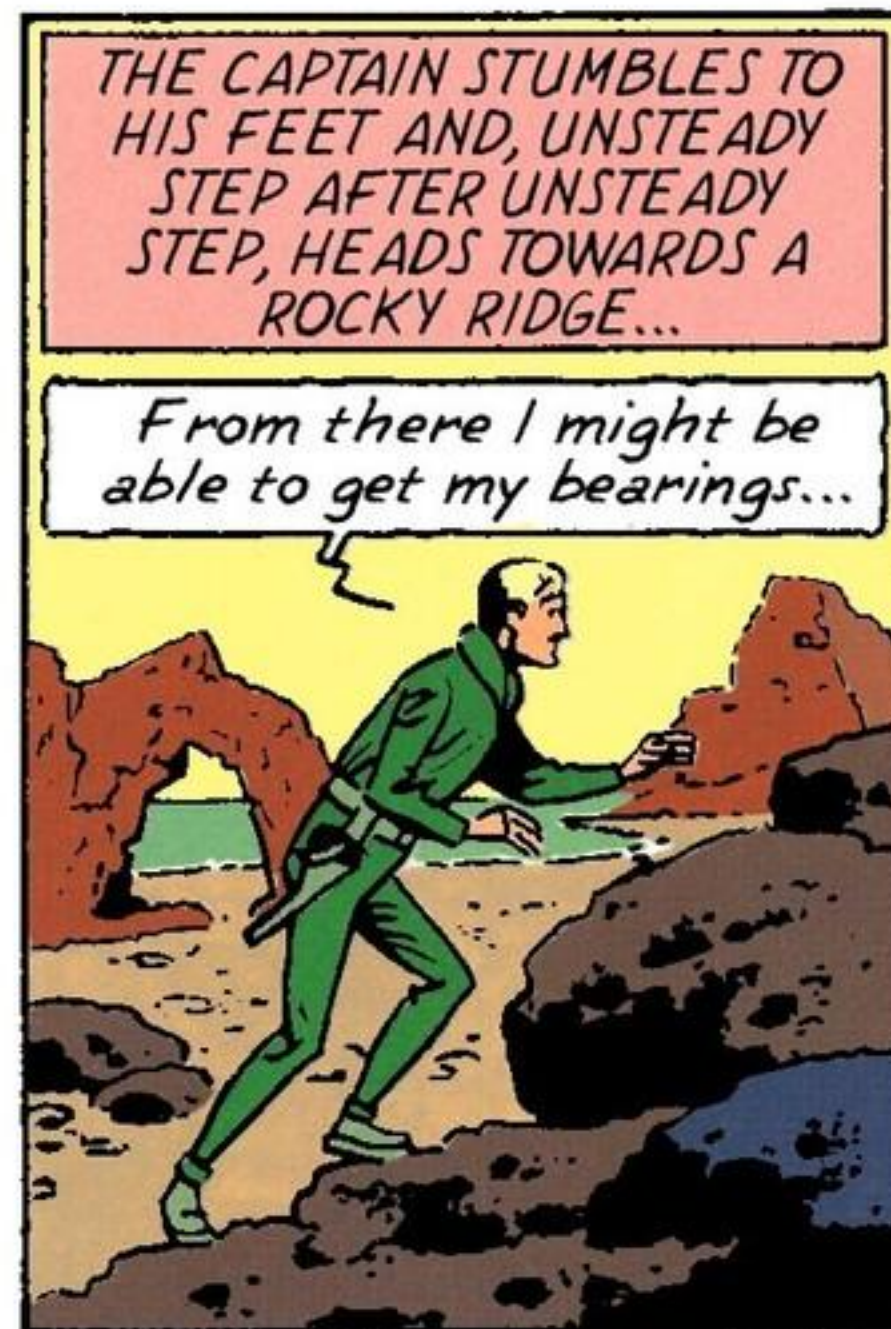
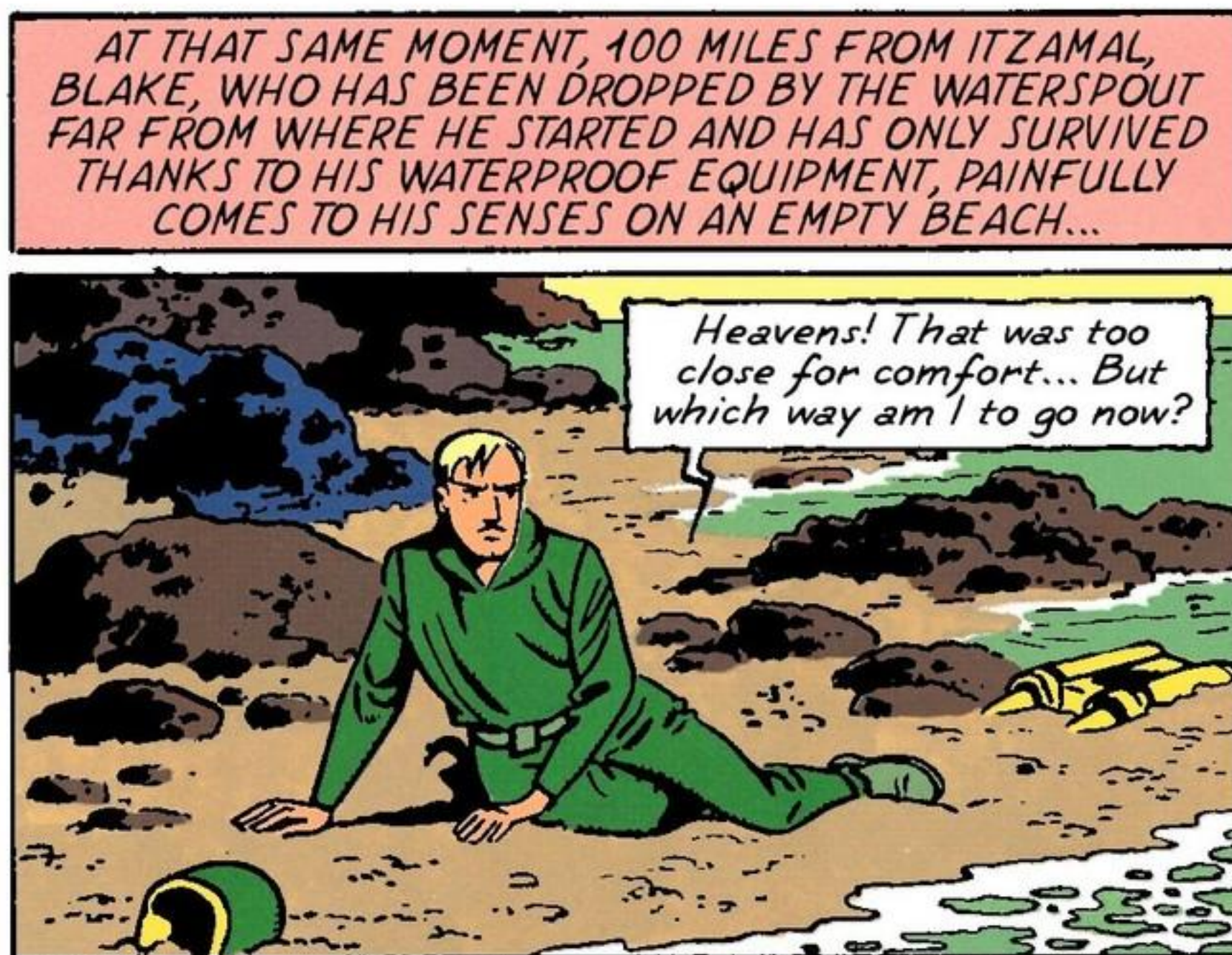
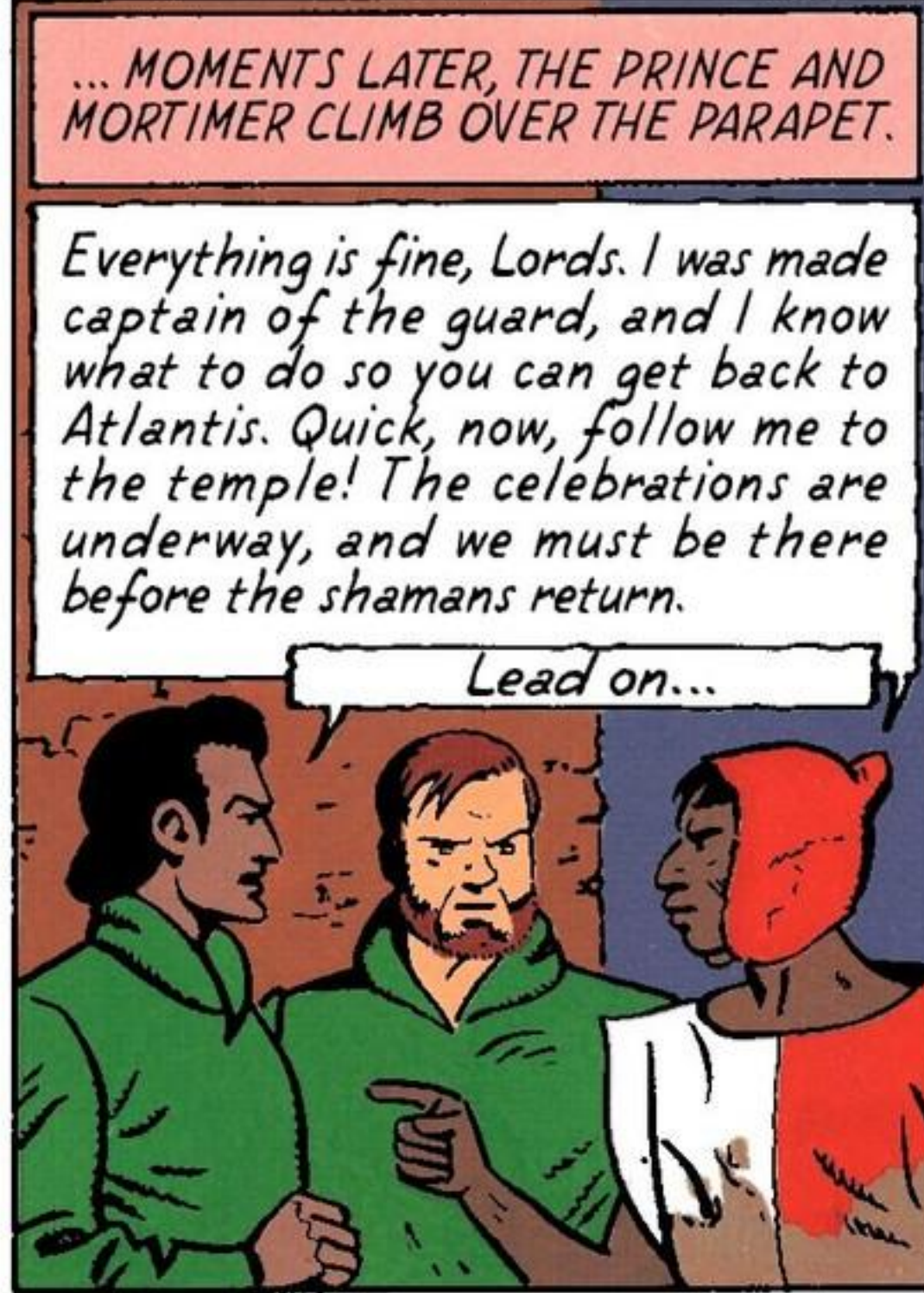
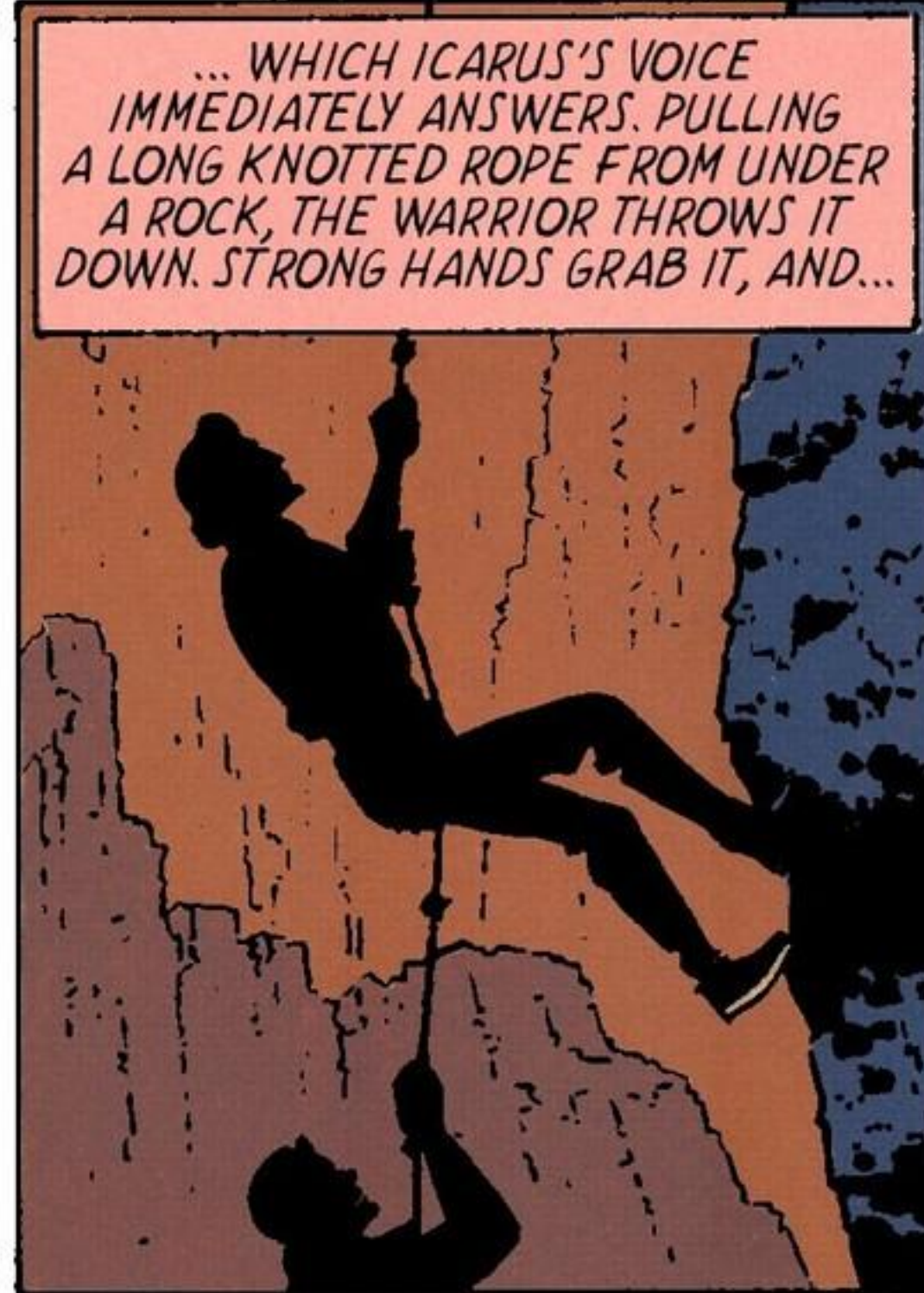
Faster!!!

AS THEY PASS NEAR A BUOY, HE SUDDENLY POINTS THE BOAT STRAIGHT AT IT. THEN, ESCAPING BLAKE'S VIGILANCE, HE DIVES INTO THE RAGING SEA!

TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THE CAPTAIN BARELY HAS TIME TO JUMP BEHIND THE WHEEL AND TURN HARD. THE CUTTER VEERS AWAY, SCRAPING THE BUOY, AND RESUMES ITS MAD RACE.







HAVING PASSED THAT FIRST OBSTACLE, THE ARMY MARCHES INTO ARROW PASS. IN THE FRONT ROW IS LOYAL KISIN, THE NEW CAPTAIN OF THE ROYAL GUARD. BEHIND HIM, RESTING ON HIS PALANQUIN, OLRIK GAZES AT THE FOUR SHAMANS WHO DANCE AND MIME THE INCANTATIONS THAT WILL CLEAR THE WARRIORS' PATH OF EVIL SPIRITS.



NO ONE SUSPECTS THAT TWO OF THE SHAMANS ARE NONE OTHER THAN MORTIMER AND THE PRINCE...

So? How much longer must we continue with this monkey business?

Patience! We'll try to slip away when we reach the Gong Tower...



... WHO, WITH THE HELP OF KISIN, MANAGED TO AMBUSH THE REAL SHAMANS IN THEIR CELLS AND DON THEIR ATTIRE!... THE TOWER IS SOON IN SIGHT, AND ICARUS GIVES THE CAPTAIN A DISCREET SIGNAL. KISIN IMMEDIATELY ORDERS HIS TROOPS TO STOP, LETTING THE SHAMANS CONTINUE ALONE TOWARDS THE BRIDGE THAT LEADS TO THE FORTRESS AND ITS TWO PHULOS ON GUARD DUTY.



Well? What's going on?!

Our shamans are going to purify this place before our men go near it, Lord!



Do you see the sphaeros in the courtyard?

Zeus is with us! Smartly, now! Do exactly as I do!...

MIMICKED BY THE PROFESSOR, ICARUS DANCES TOWARDS THE SURPRISED GUARDS WITH MUCH ENTHUSIASTIC GESTURING, AND THEN...



... THROWING AWAY THEIR UNWIELDY MASKS, THE TWO MEN SPRINT TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE.

Let's go!!!



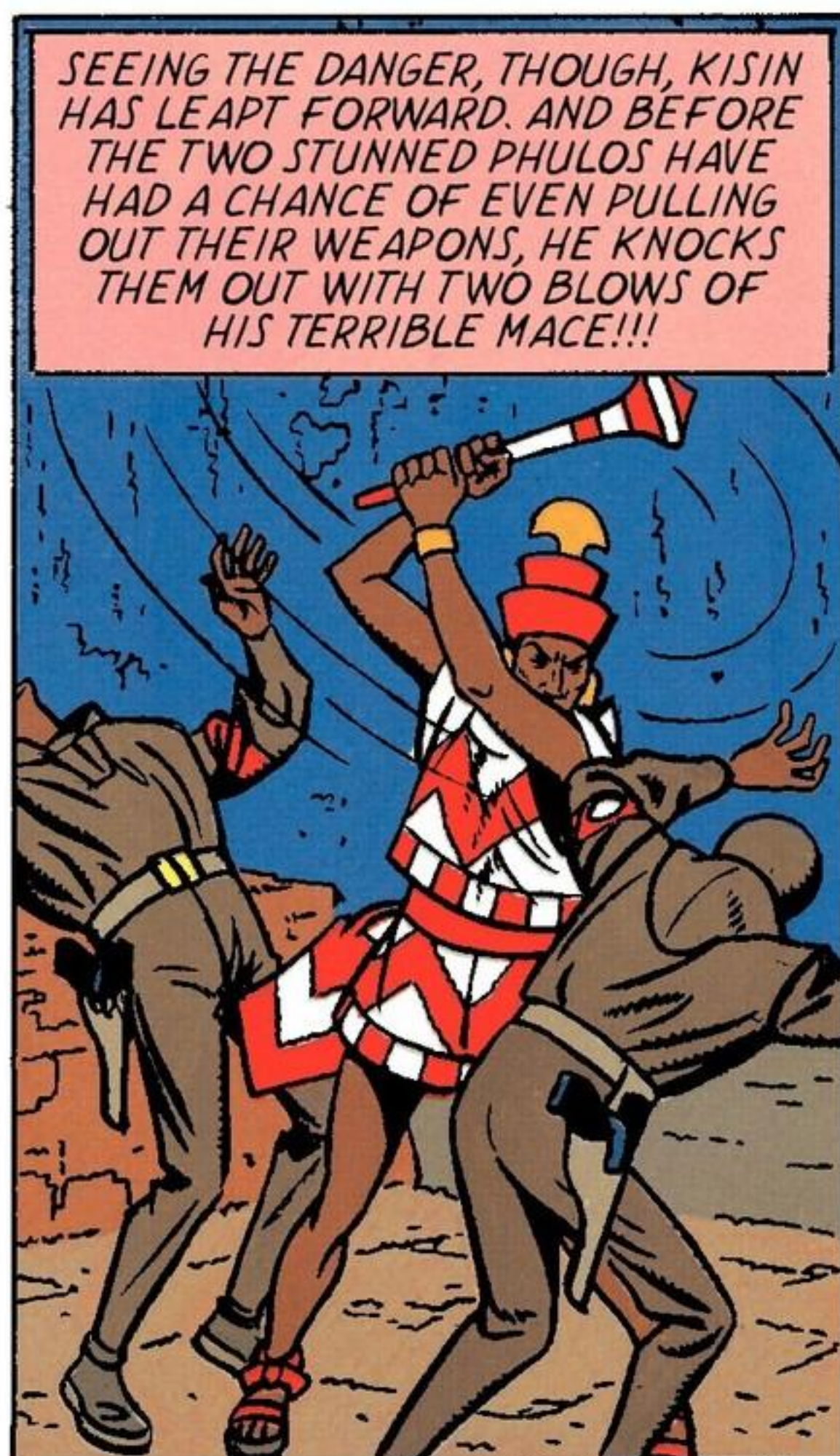
ALAS! MORTIMER HAS GONE NO MORE THAN 10 YARDS WHEN, CATCHING HIS FEET IN HIS LONG CLOAK, HE FALLS HEAVILY TO THE GROUND.

Ow!

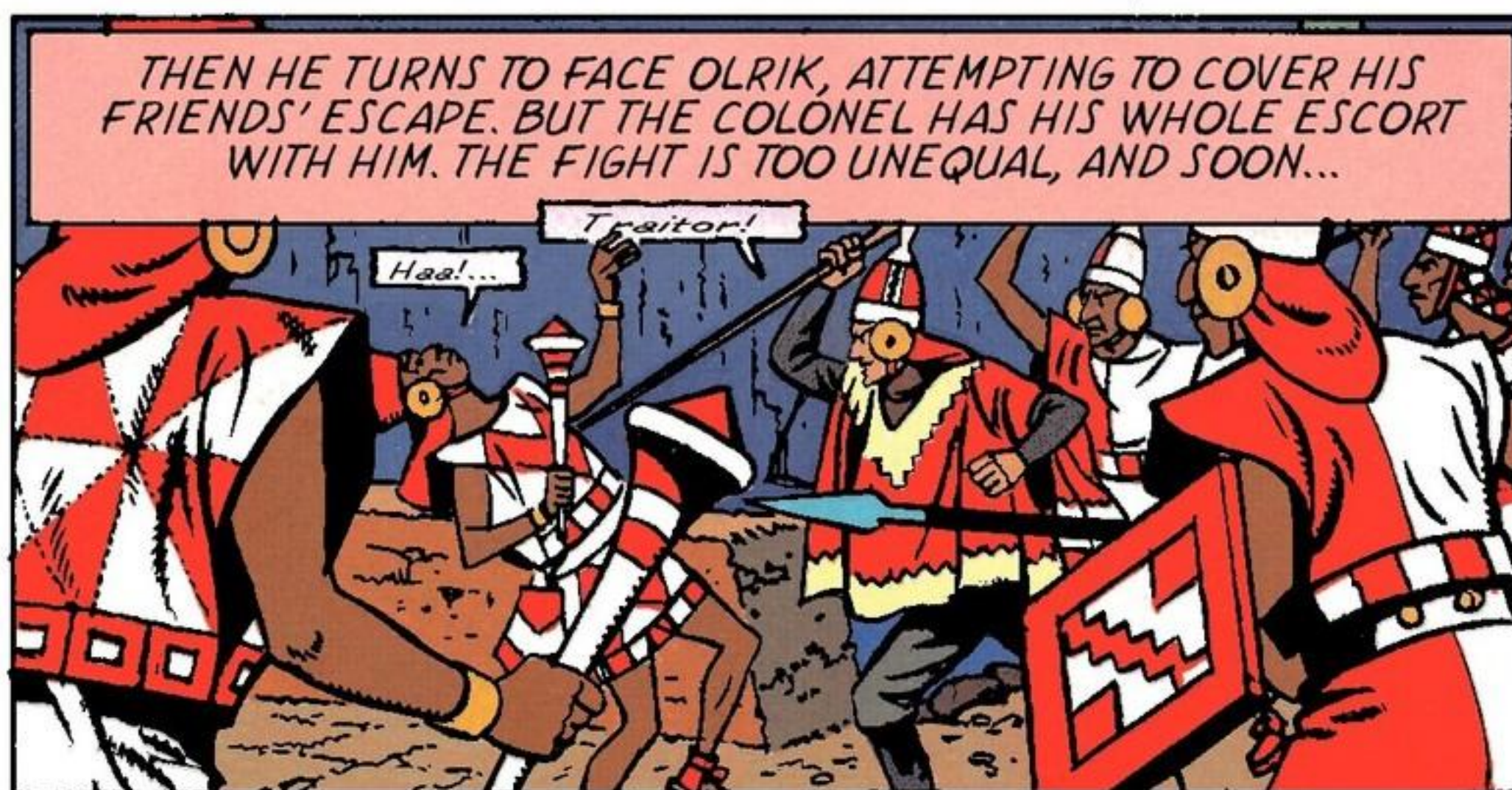


AT THAT SIGHT, OLRIK LETS OUT A ROAR OF OUTRAGE!

Mortimer and the prince!? By the devil! Fire!... Fire, you imbeciles!!!



SEEING THE DANGER, THOUGH, KISIN HAS LEAPT FORWARD. AND BEFORE THE TWO STUNNED PHULOS HAVE HAD A CHANCE OF EVEN PULLING OUT THEIR WEAPONS, HE KNOCKS THEM OUT WITH TWO BLOWS OF HIS TERRIBLE MACE!!!



THEN HE TURNS TO FACE OLRIK, ATTEMPTING TO COVER HIS FRIENDS' ESCAPE. BUT THE COLONEL HAS HIS WHOLE ESCORT WITH HIM. THE FIGHT IS TOO UNEQUAL, AND SOON...

Traitor!

Haa!...



HIS SACRIFICE IS NOT IN VAIN. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BRIEF RESPITE, ICARUS HAS MANAGED TO DRAG A STILL-DAZED MORTIMER INTO THE COURTYARD. UNFORTUNATELY, JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO REACH THE SPHEROS, TWO MORE GUARDS APPEAR BEFORE THEM...

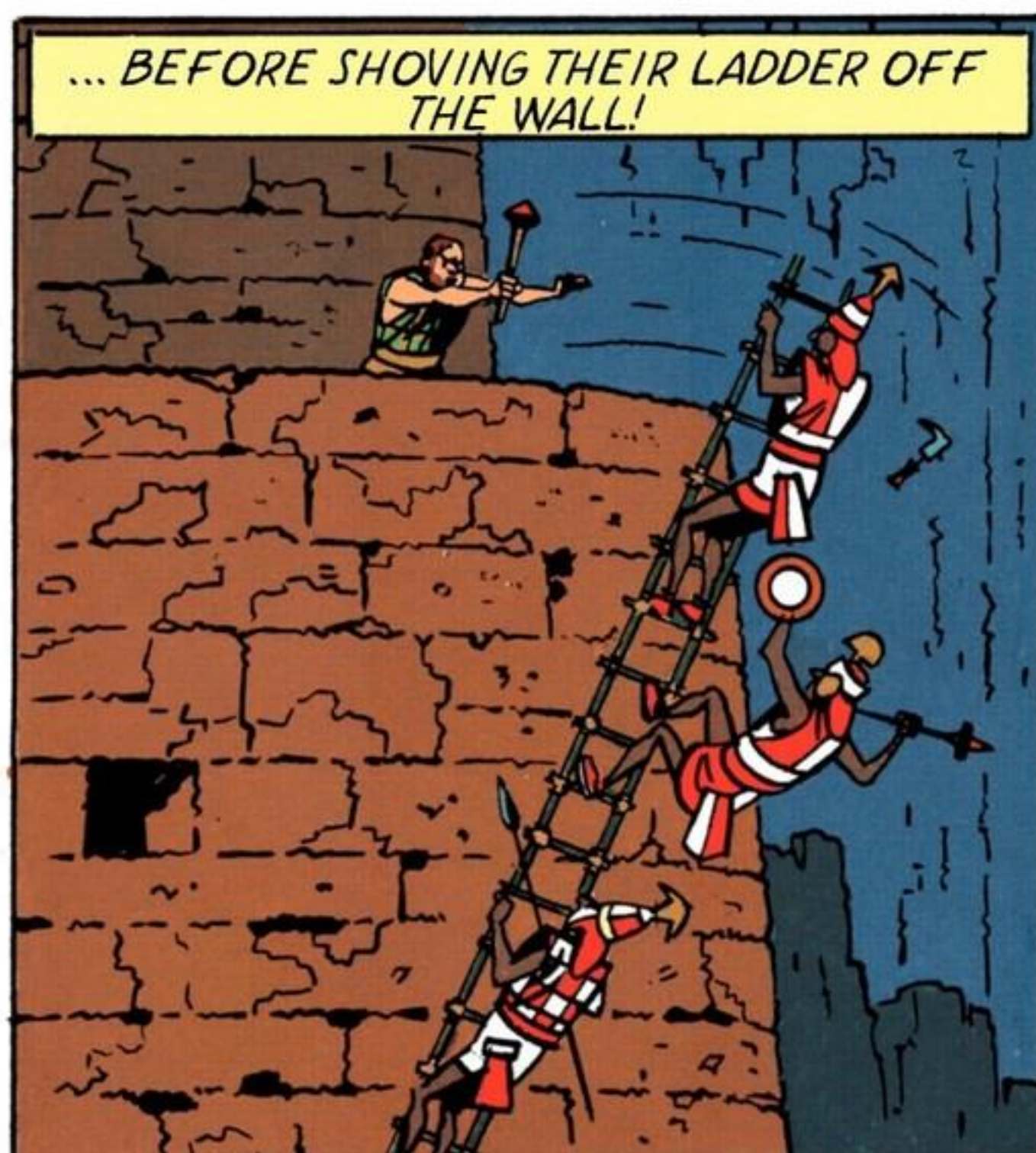
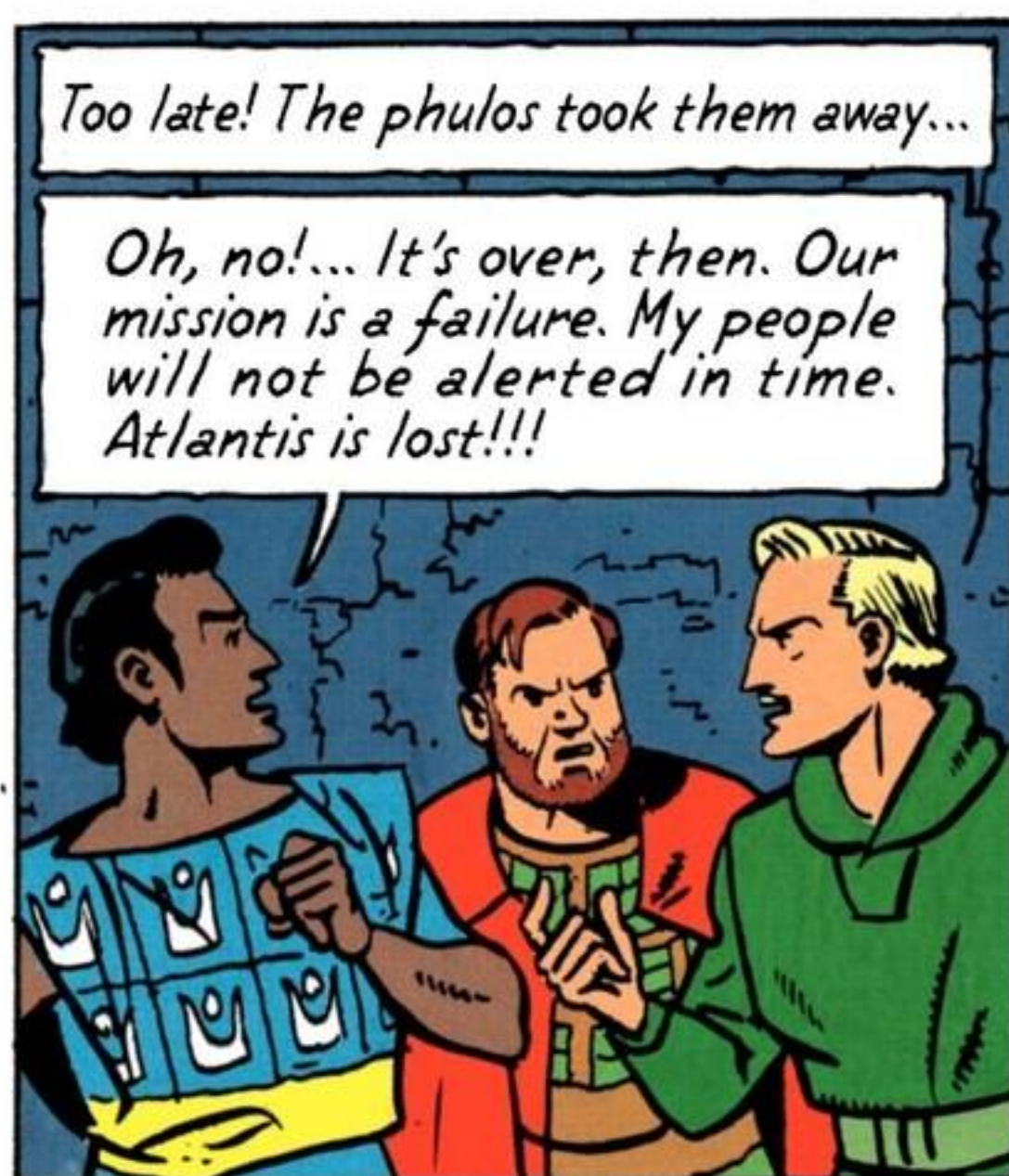
Halt!

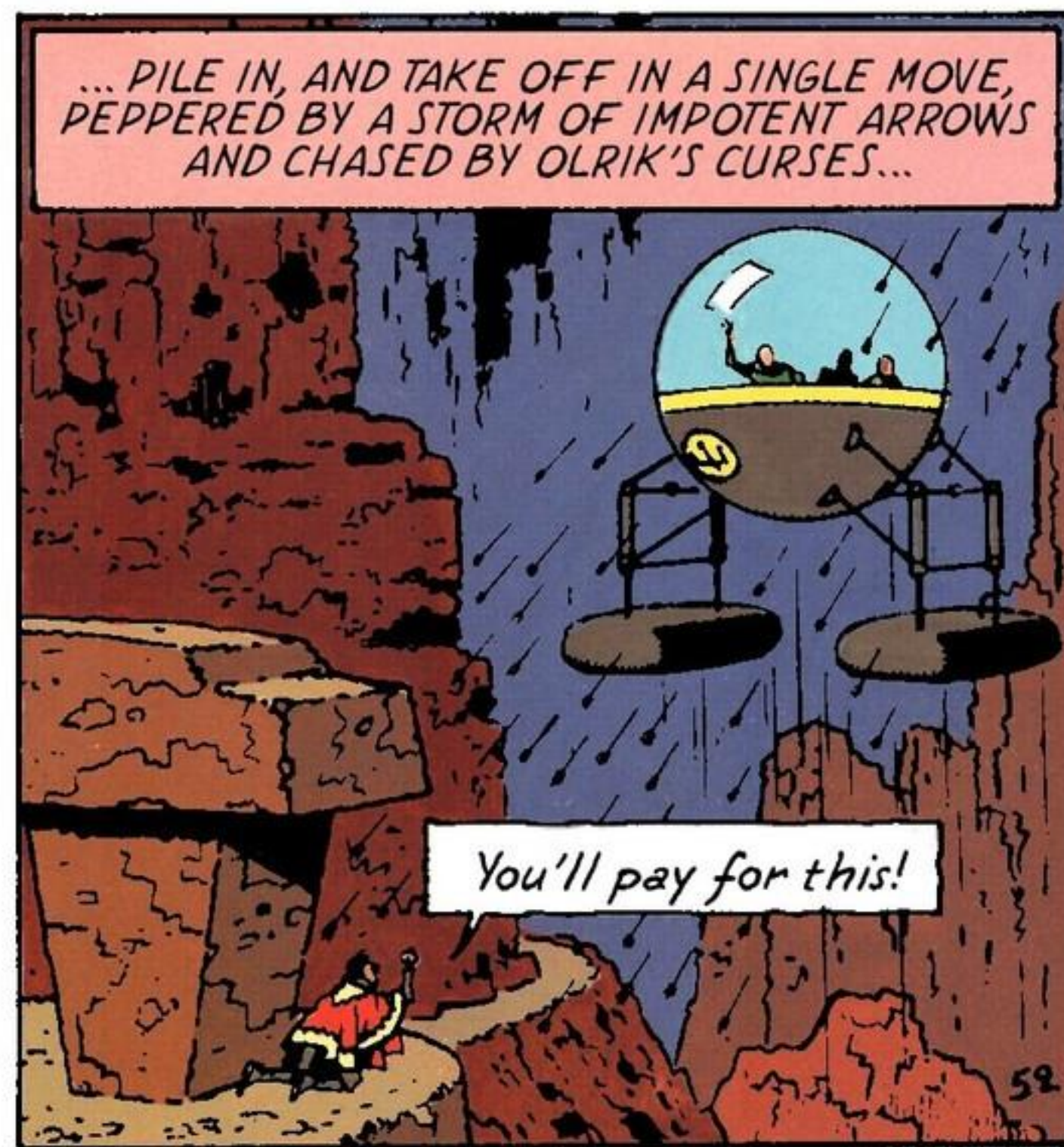
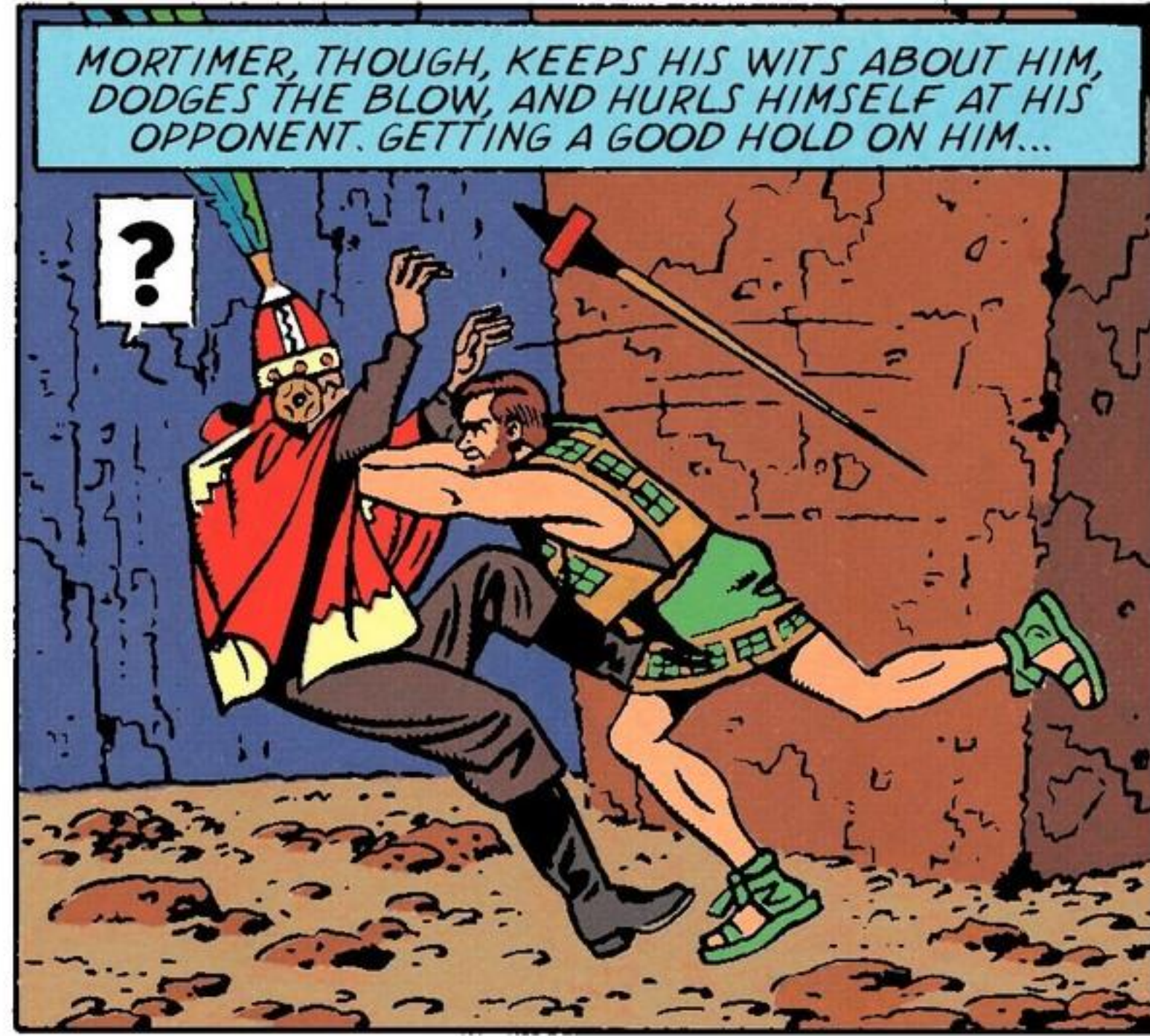
Too late! Quick, to the tower!!!



FRANTICALLY SCRAMBLING UP STAIRS AND RUBBLE, THEY HEAD TOWARDS THE COMMANDER'S CHAMBER, WHERE THE WEAPONS DESTINED FOR THE UPRISING ARE STOCKPILED...

Hurry! If we can reach the weapons cache, we're saved!





WHILE THESE DRAMATIC EVENTS TAKE PLACE, THE POWERFUL SOUNDS OF THE SACRED GONG HAVE RAISED THE ALARM IN POSEIDOPOLIS, CAUSING ASTONISHMENT AND CONSTERNATION. MAGON, SURPRISED BY THIS UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS, HAS RUSHED TO THE BASILEUS'S SIDE IN AN ATTEMPT TO DOWNPLAY THE FACTS...

There's no doubt in my mind, Your Majesty. The gong must have fallen after the ropes holding it snapped, and...

That's possible. But I still called Omegara. I want to know!



SOON, PHOKIS, THE OUTPOST COMMANDER, APPEARS ON THE SCREEN.

Well, Phokis? What's going on?

I don't know, Your Majesty. I was about to send a patrol to go check at the... Ah! I'm told there's a spheros coming our way!



IT IS THE VEHICLE OUR THREE FRIENDS USED TO ESCAPE THAT HAS JUST COME INTO VIEW OF THE FORT. AND...

Sound the alarm! The barbarians are attacking! We've been betrayed!!

Betrayed!?



SHOCKED, THE COMMANDER REAPPEARS AND RESUMES HIS REPORT.

Your Majesty!... Dire news, Your Majesty! The barbarians have breached the Great Gate!!! We've been



BUT, AT THAT VERY MOMENT A BOLT OF FIRE STRIKES NEAR THE TRANSMISSION TOWER, DESTROYING THE ANTENNAS...



THE SCREEN INSTANTLY BLANKS OUT. IN THE SUDDEN SILENCE, THE STUNNED VIEWERS ARE LEFT TO THEIR DISBELIEF...

Phokis is mad! I cannot believe that...

Enough!... Muster the troops, and call a meeting of the Council within the hour. Go!...



BACK AT OMEGARA, THE SITUATION IS QUICKLY WORSENING. PHOKIS, UNDERSTANDING THAT THE WISEST COURSE IS TO FALL BACK TO THE CAPITAL RIGHT AWAY, ORDERS THE EVACUATION.

Hello! Hello! The entire garrison must board the monorail immediately! Hurry up!!!



DESPITE THE SUSTAINED FIRE FROM THEIR INVISIBLE ENEMY, THE OUTPOST'S MEN OBEY THEIR ORDERS WITH SPEED AND DISCIPLINE.



THE MONORAIL FINALLY LEAVES JUST AS THE ARMOURY IS HIT AND GOES UP IN A SPECTACULAR EXPLOSION!...



UNFORTUNATELY, THIS IS NOT THE END OF IT. FROM THE AIR WHERE THEY ARE ESCORTING THE CONVOY, OUR FRIENDS CAN CLEARLY SEE THAT THE TRAIN IS ADVANCING IN THE MIDDLE OF A CIRCLE OF EXPLOSIONS THAT TRAVELS WITH IT AND SLOWLY TIGHTENS...

I doubt they'll be able to make it... Those things are nasty...

And there's nothing we can do to help!

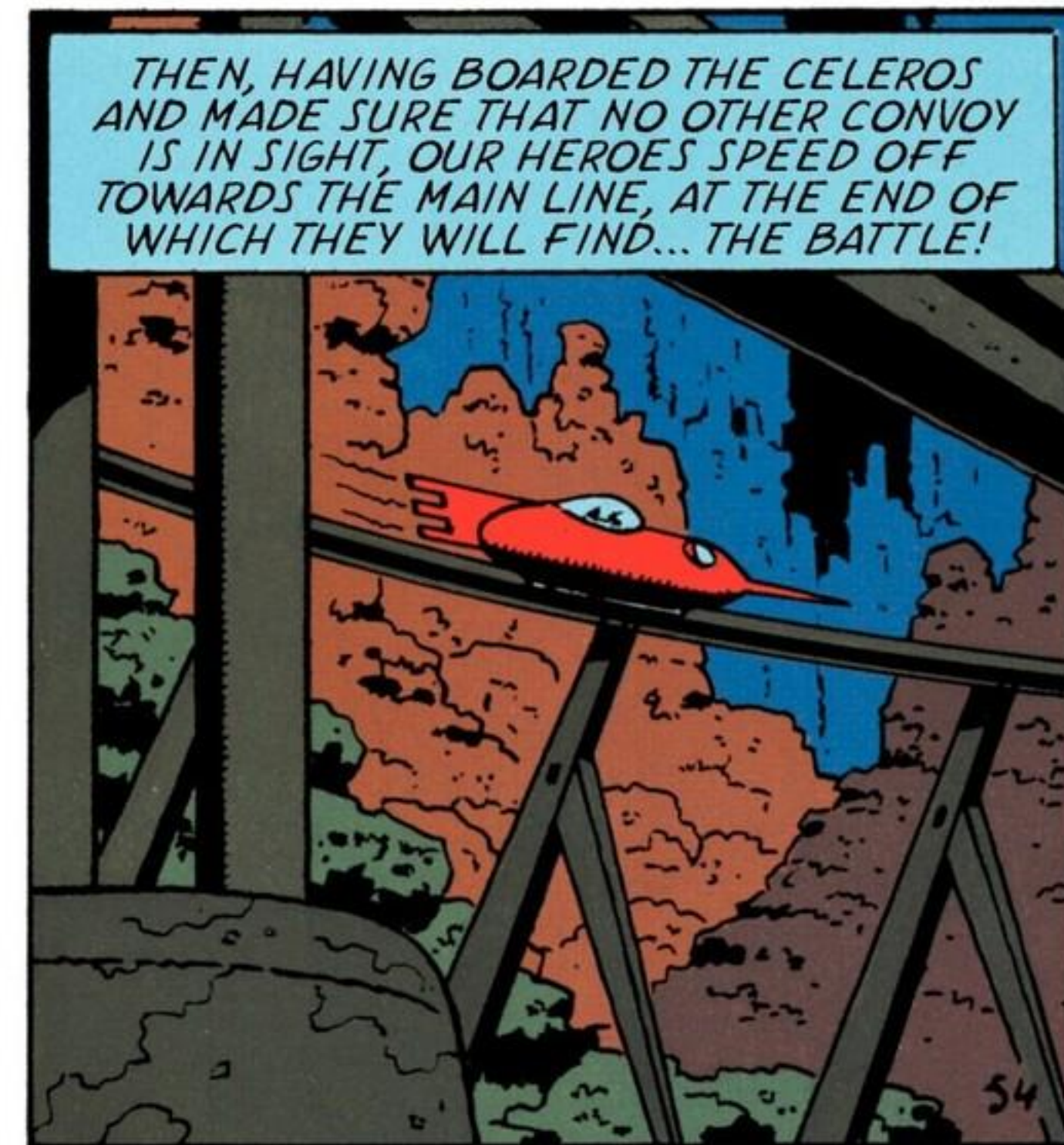
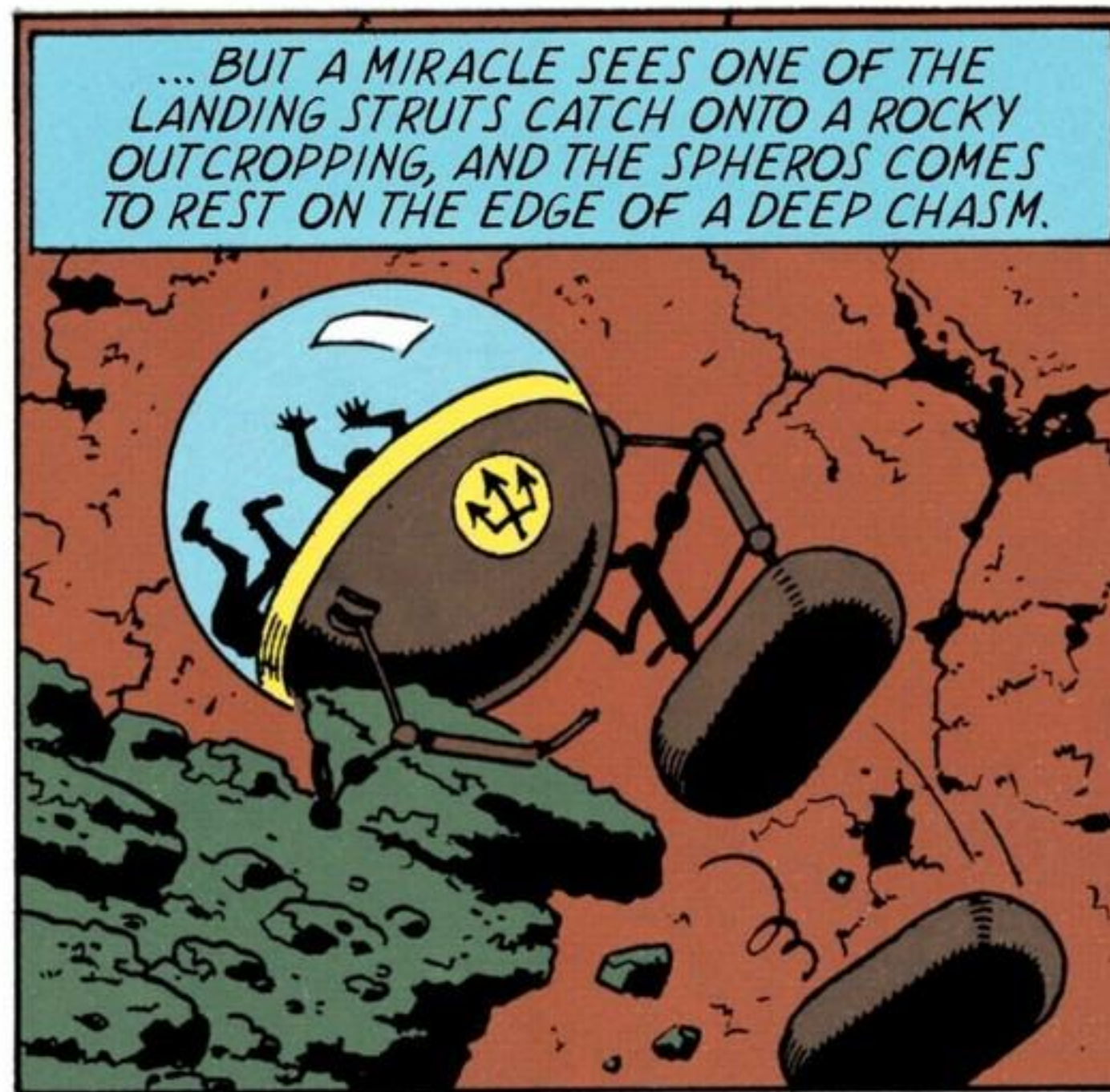


NO SOONER HAVE THEY UTTERED THESE WORDS THAN THE MONORAIL IS STRUCK DEAD-ON AND BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS!



CAUGHT IN THE SHOCKWAVE, THE SPHEROS TIPS OVER IN THE AIR AND BEGINS TUMBLING DOWN TOWARDS THE GROUND, DESPITE ICARUS'S DESPERATE EFFORTS TO PULL UP...







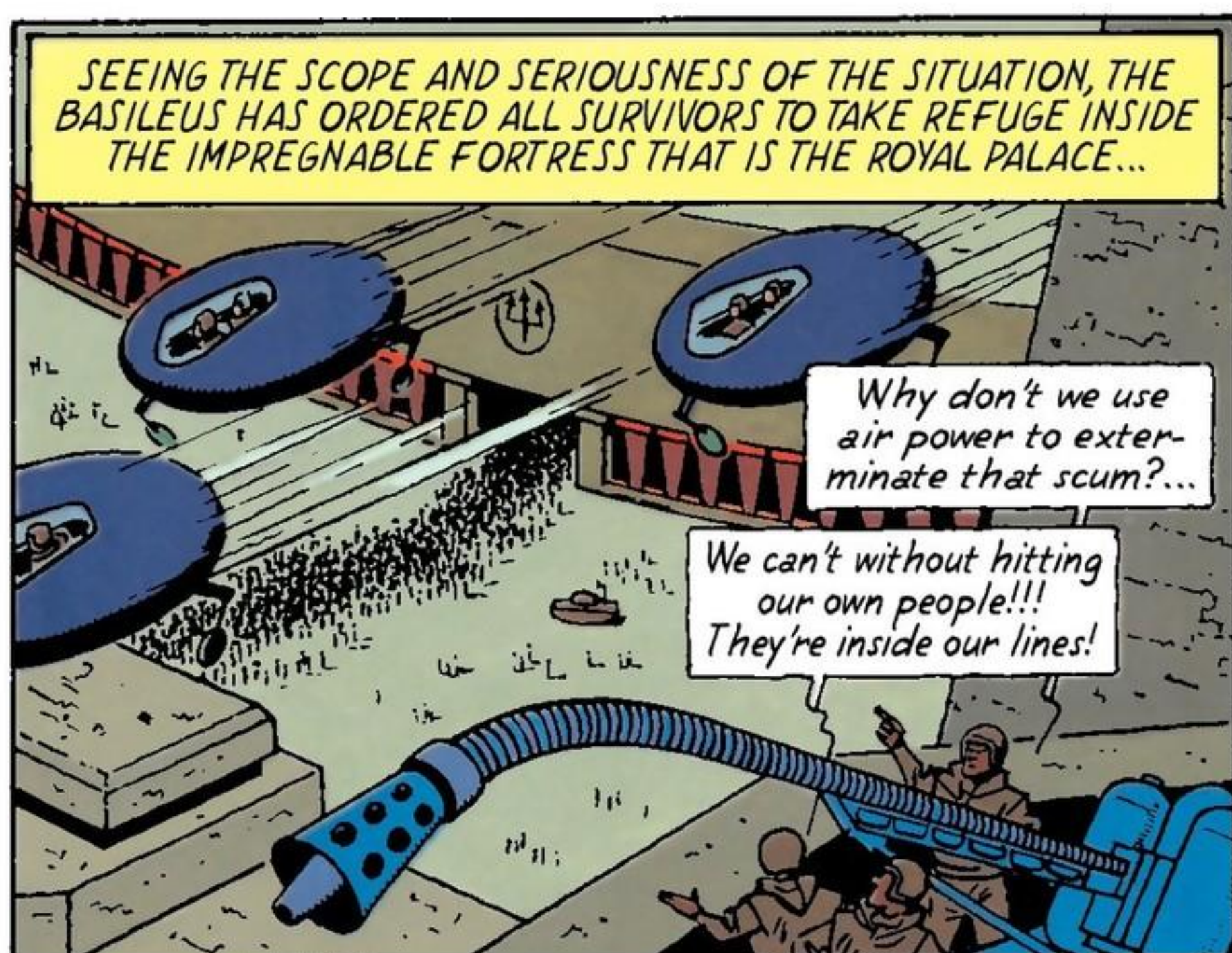
WHILE THE THREE MEN BARREL DOWN TOWARDS POSEIDOPOLIS, THE CAPITAL CITY—HALF OF IT ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF THE INVADERS—IS FIGHTING A DESPERATE BATTLE AGAINST THE BARBARIAN HORDE, WHICH, THANKS TO THE TREACHERY OF MAGON AND HIS ACCOMPLICES, IS SWEEPING AWAY EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH. SABOTAGED, THE ATLANTEAN BATTERIES ARE OVER-RUN ONE BY ONE, THEIR CREWS SLAUGHTERED ON THE SPOT...

Hello! Hello! This is Archias battery; the guns have been sabotaged!

I can't! The firing mechanism is jammed!!!

By Zeus! What are you waiting for? Fire!!!

Run away!



SEEING THE SCOPE AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION, THE BASILEUS HAS ORDERED ALL SURVIVORS TO TAKE REFUGE INSIDE THE IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS THAT IS THE ROYAL PALACE...

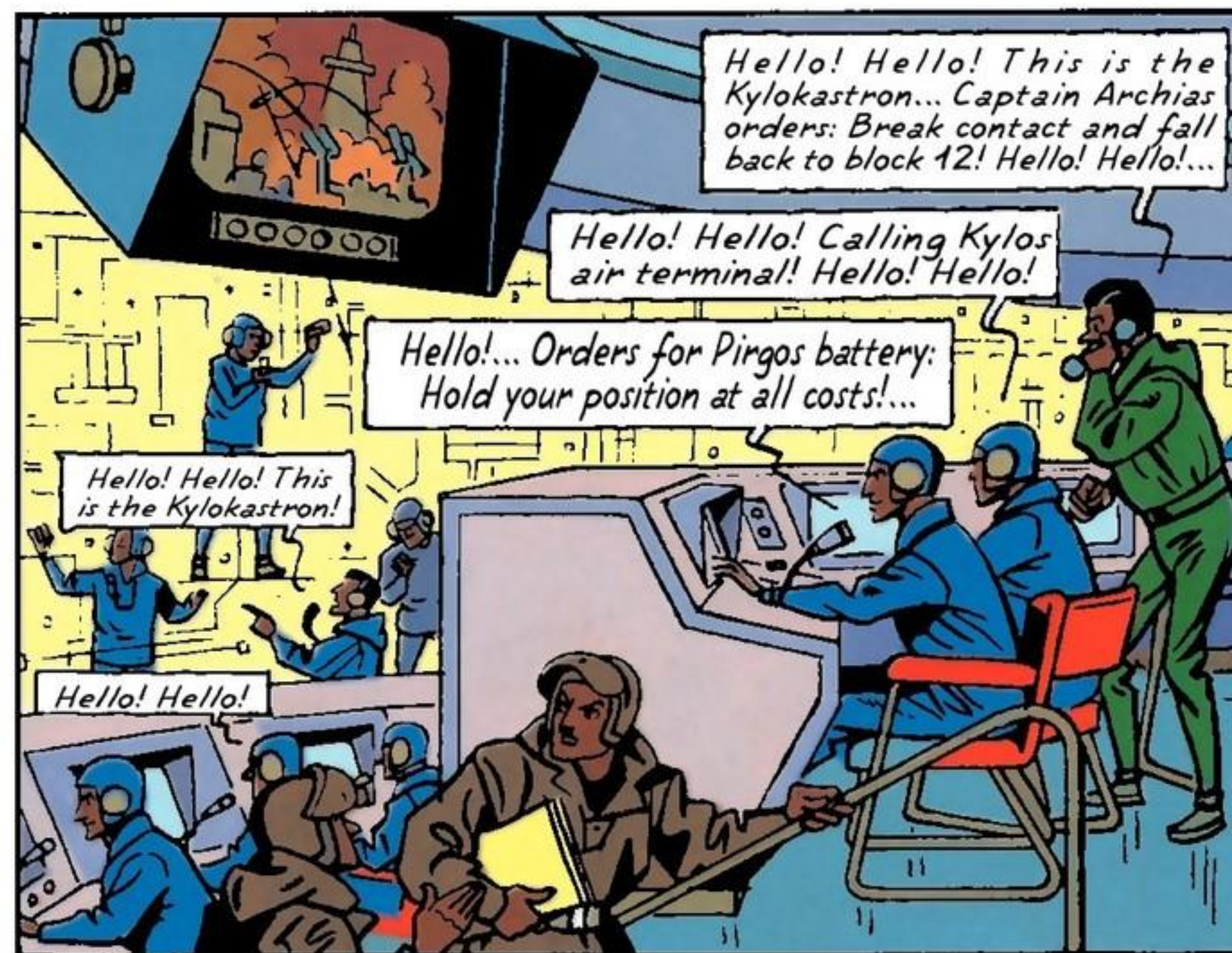
Why don't we use air power to exterminate that scum?...

We can't without hitting our own people!!! They're inside our lines!



... WHILE, IN THE COMMAND CHAMBER, AMIDST THE BAD NEWS THAT KEEPS COMING, THE OVERWHELMED STAFF TRIES IN VAIN TO STOP THE ENEMY'S ADVANCE...

Hello! Hello! This is the Ogygia sector CP! The second line is breached! Awaiting orders...



Hello! Hello! This is the Kylokastron... Captain Archias orders: Break contact and fall back to block 12! Hello! Hello!...

Hello! Hello! Calling Kylos air terminal! Hello! Hello!

Hello!... Orders for Pirgos battery: Hold your position at all costs!...

Hello! Hello! This is the Kylokastron!

Hello! Hello!



BUT THE COORDINATED ACTIONS OF THE REBELS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE RANKS OF THE ATLANTEANS CAUSE THE KEY DEFENSIVE POSITIONS TO FALL TO THE ENEMY, ONE BY ONE.

Go on, Archon! Surrender if you value your life!!!

Hands up!

Traitor!!!

?



BUT, AS GUARDS AND BARBARIANS FIGHT BITTER HAND-TO-HAND BATTLES THROUGHOUT THE STREETS, ICARUS, BLAKE, AND MORTIMER ARE RUNNING THROUGH THE RUINS OF THE BURNING CITY, HEADING TOWARDS THE PALACE.

Almost there! The entrance to the underground passages is very near!

I hope we get there in time!...

Hello! Hello! This is Merope sector!... The great dam has fallen! Awaiting orders!...



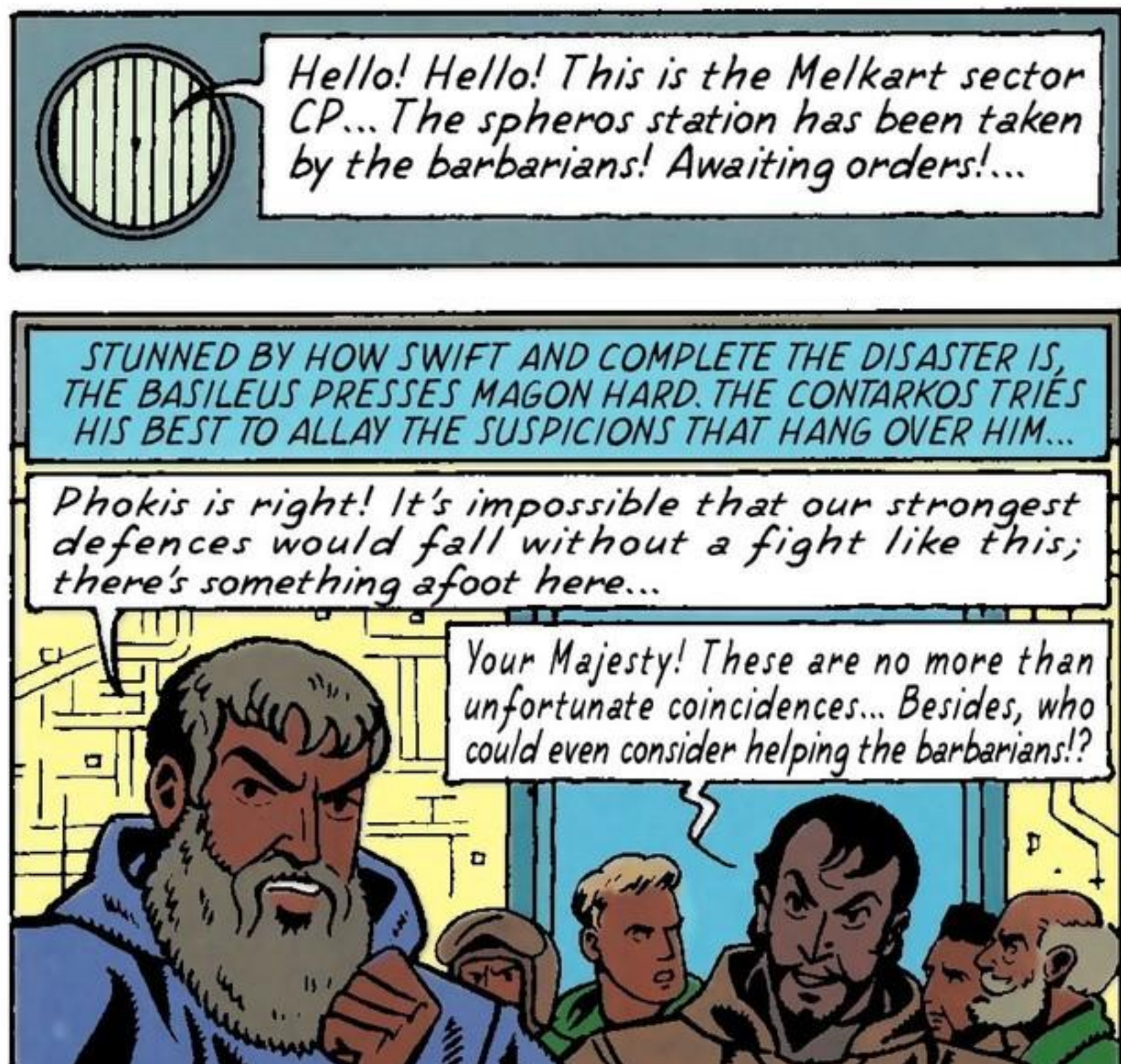
EVENTS ARE STILL UNROLLING AT BREAKNECK SPEED, THOUGH. SUDDENLY, EVERY VIEWSCREEN SHUTS OFF AT THE SAME TIME, DISABLING ALL COMMUNICATIONS, AND A WOUNDED OFFICER STUMBLES INTO THE ROOM...

Your Majesty! The television station has been destroyed! Sabotage!!!

How can it be?

Here?...

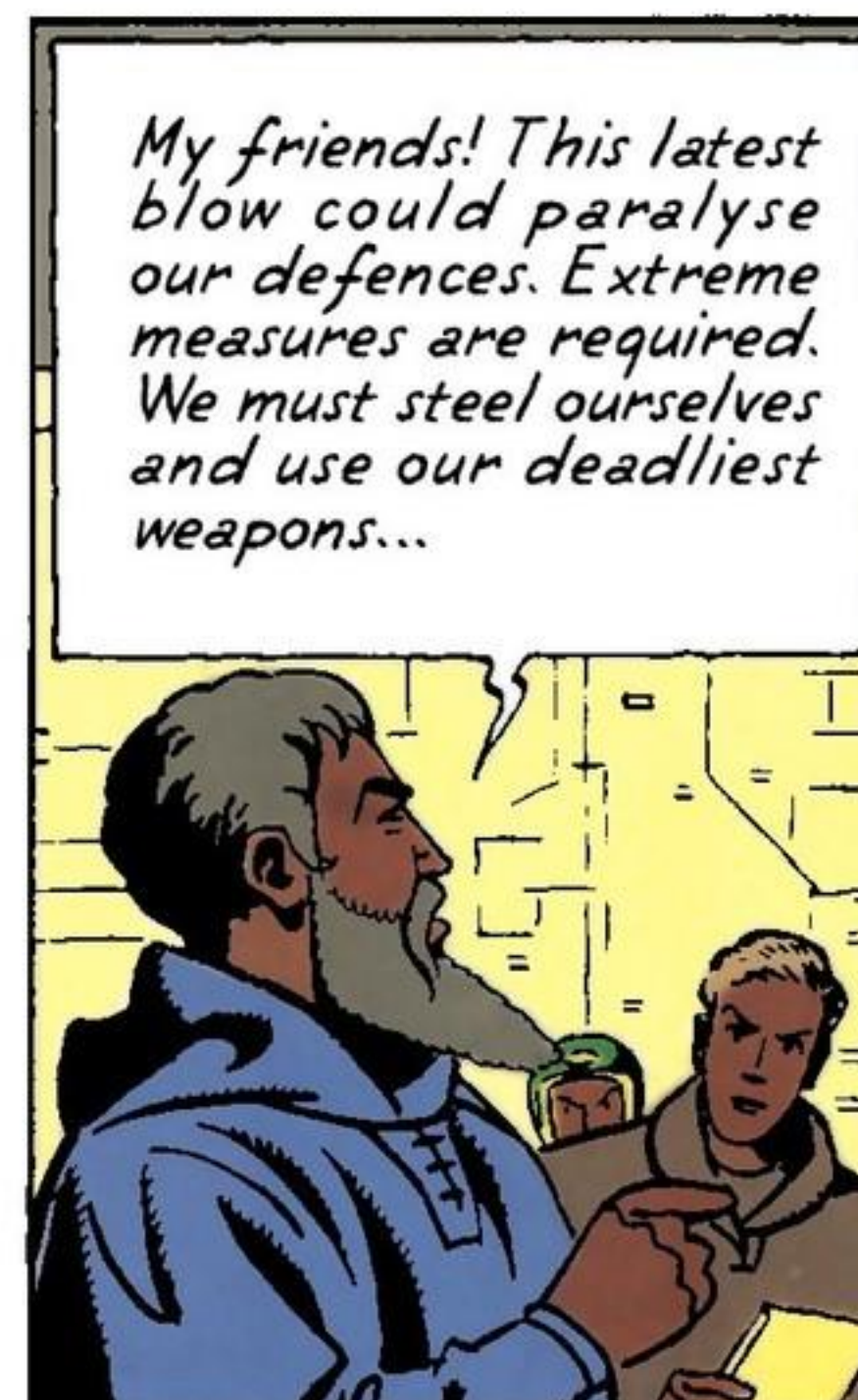
Sabotage!



STUNNED BY HOW SWIFT AND COMPLETE THE DISASTER IS, THE BASILEUS PRESSES MAGON HARD. THE CONTARKOS TRIES HIS BEST TO ALLAY THE SUSPICIONS THAT HANG OVER HIM...

Phokis is right! It's impossible that our strongest defences would fall without a fight like this; there's something afoot here...

Your Majesty! These are no more than unfortunate coincidences... Besides, who could even consider helping the barbarians!?

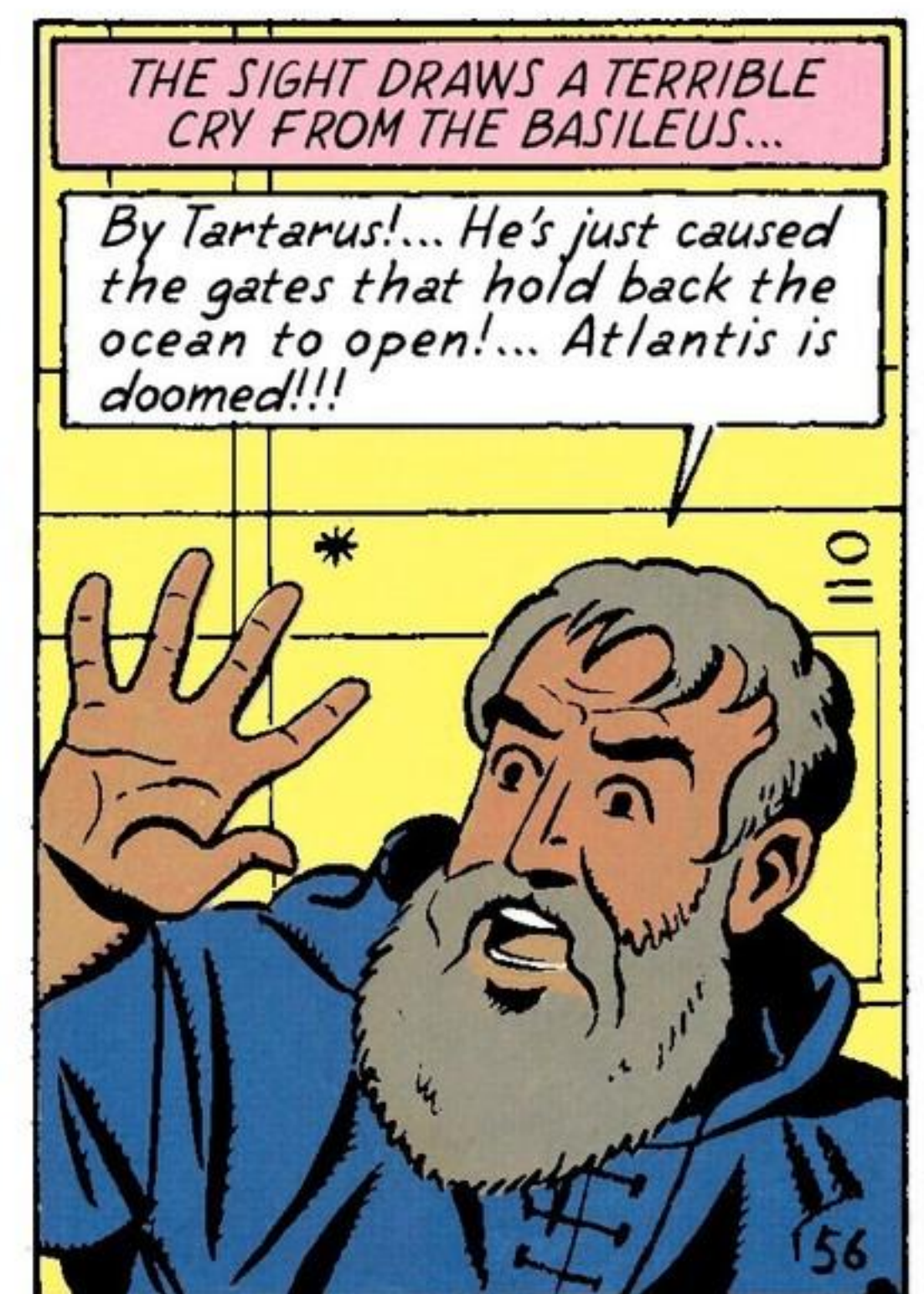
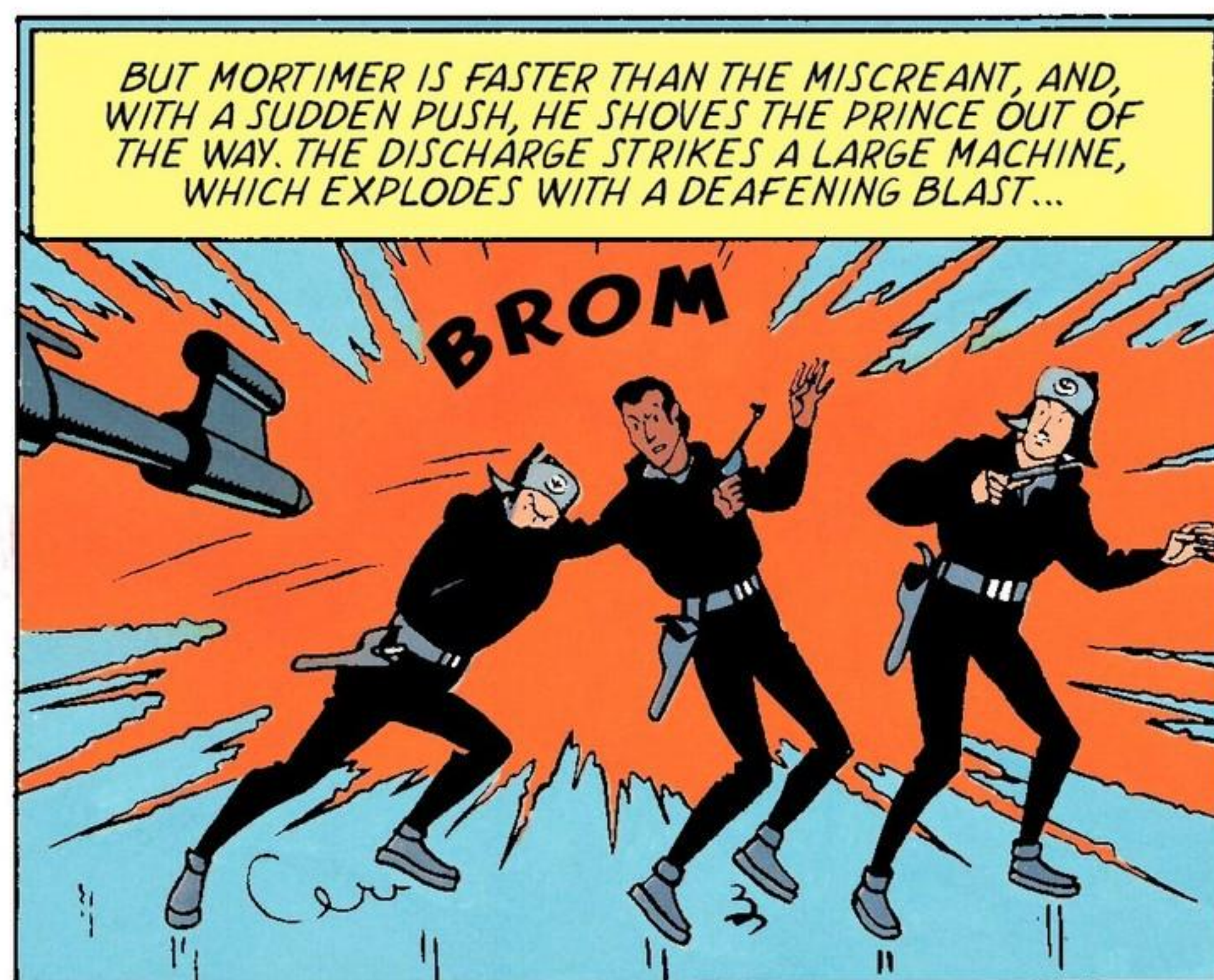
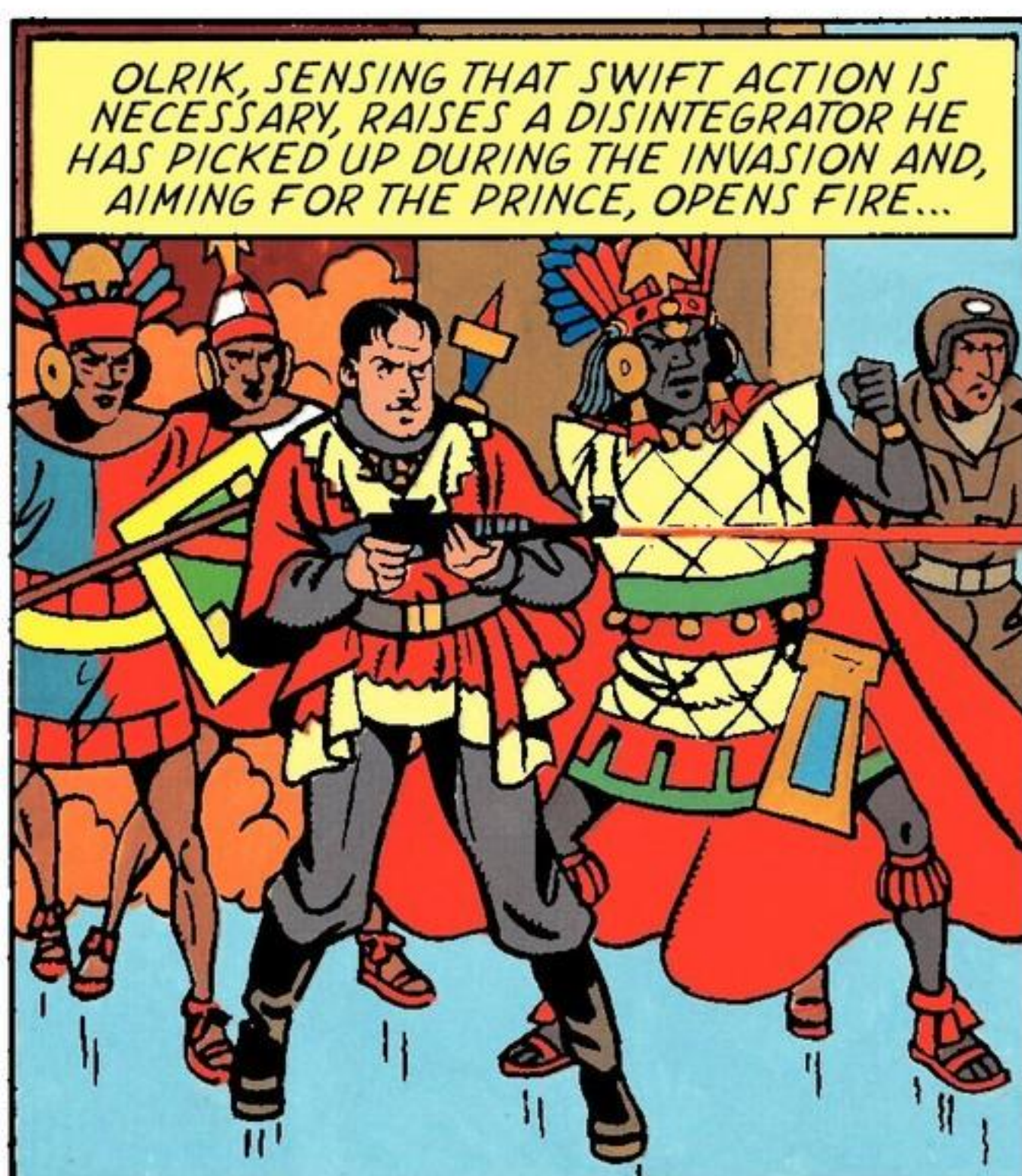
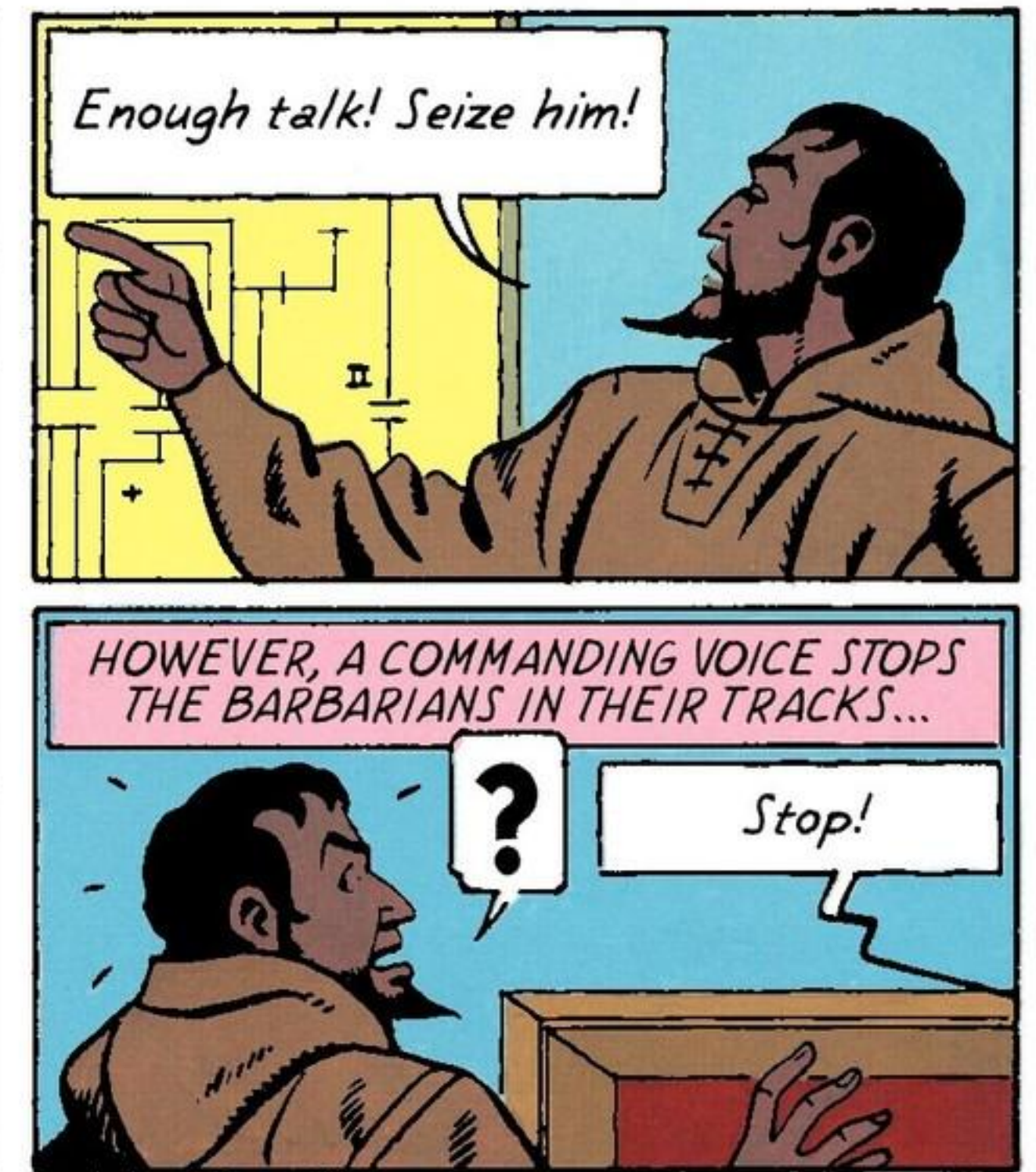
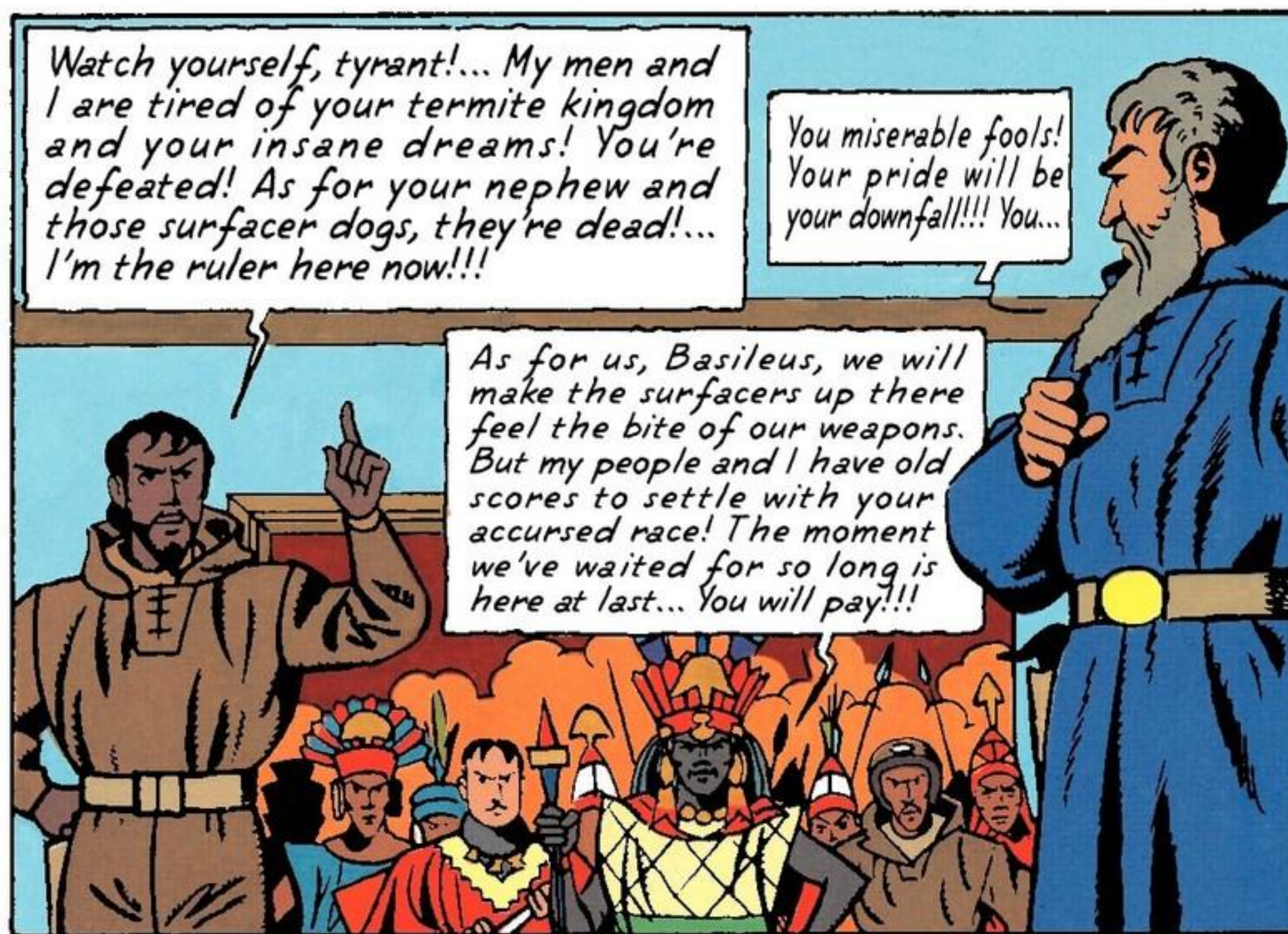
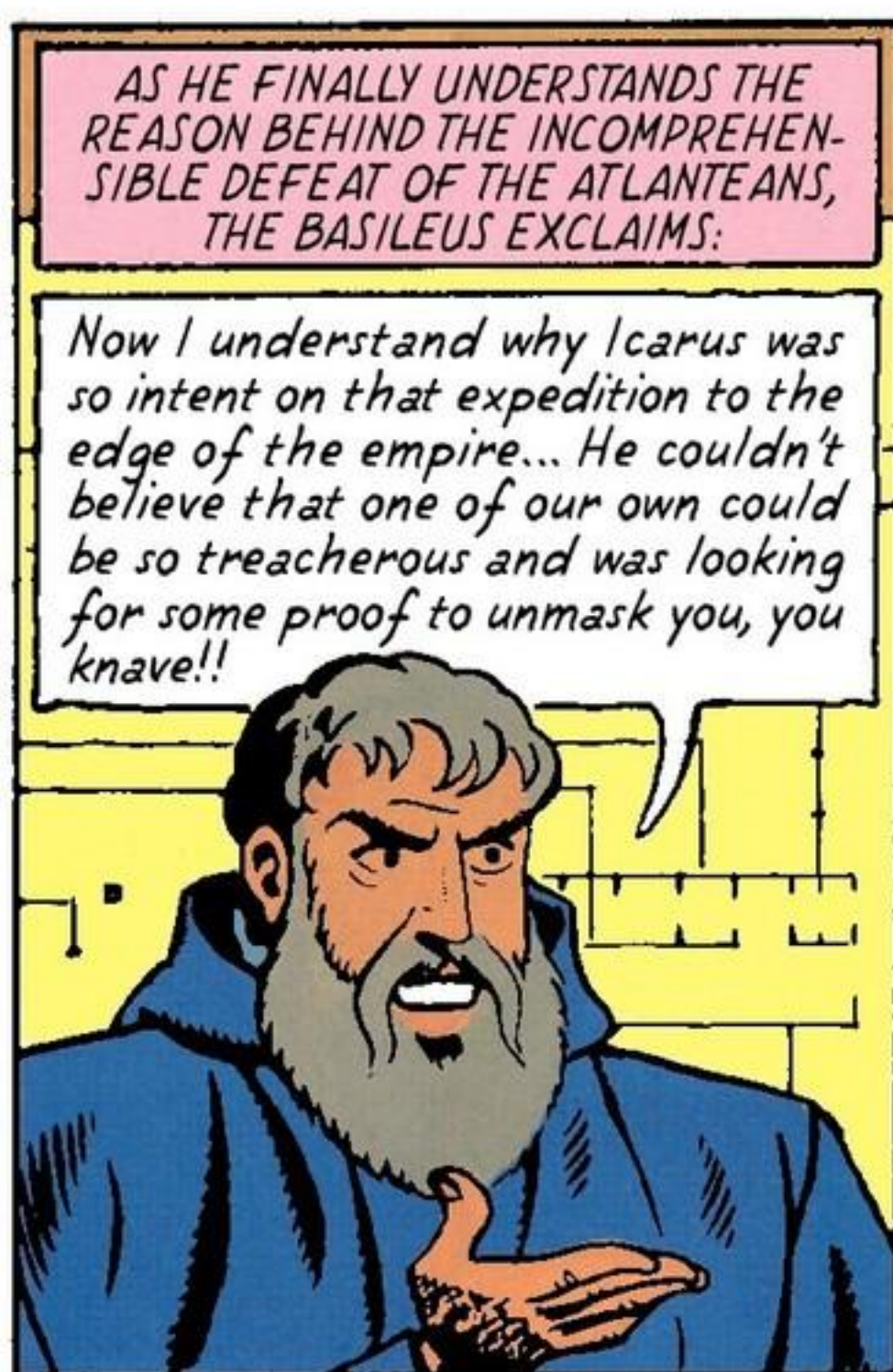


My friends! This latest blow could paralyse our defences. Extreme measures are required. We must steel ourselves and use our deadliest weapons...



AT THAT MOMENT, MAGON'S VOICE, BITING AND HARSH, RISES LIKE A CHALLENGE.

Too late, Basileus!!!



AT THIS TERRIFYING EXCLAMATION, EVERYONE IN THE ROOM FREEZES IN PLACE. A LOW RUMBLING SOUND, CAUSED BY THE WATERS RUSHING FREELY, SHAKES THE COLOSSAL WALLS OF THE PALACE AS IF TO PUNCTUATE THE BASILEUS'S CRY.



BUT, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION, THE PRINCE DASHES TOWARDS THE COMMAND CONSOLE THAT CONTROLS AND MONITORS EVERY VITAL ORGAN OF THE UNDERGROUND CITY AND SWIFTLY PULLS DOWN ONE OF THE SWITCHES...



... CAUSING A BLINDING GATE OF FIRE TO COME DOWN FROM THE CEILING AND SLAM BETWEEN THE ATLANTEANS AND THEIR TERRIFIED ENEMIES...



... WHO, PANIC-STRICKEN, RETREAT TOWARDS THE CORRIDOR IN DISARRAY, DRIVEN BACK BY THE STRANGE, MOVING WALL OF FLAME.



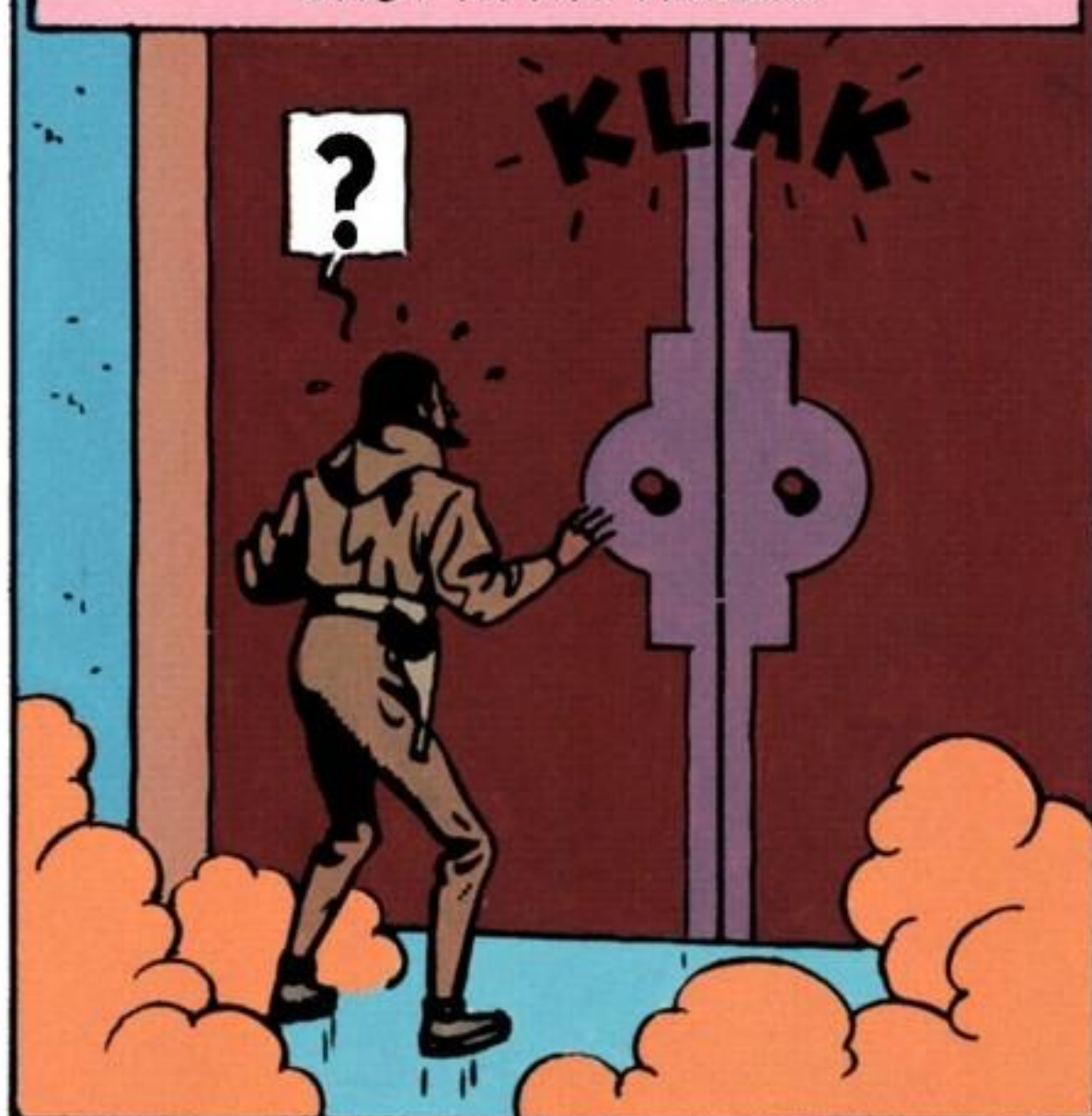
AS FOR MAGON, FINDING HIMSELF CUT OFF FROM HIS ALLIES AND AT THE MERCY OF THE ONE HE HAS JUST BEEN THREATENING, HE THROWS HIMSELF AT THE FEET OF THE KING.



TURNING TOWARDS HIS LOYAL SUBJECTS, HE ADDS:



EVERYONE GOES AFTER HIM INTO THE COMMAND ROOM, WITHOUT EVEN SPARING A GLANCE FOR THE TRAITOR WHO SEES THE HEAVY DOOR SLAM SHUT IN HIS FACE...



REALISING AT LAST WHAT LIES IN WAIT FOR HIM, DRIVEN MAD BY FEAR, MAGON BEGINS HAMMERING ON THE CLOSED DOOR WITH HIS FISTS...



MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY, THE OCEAN, FREED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CONTROL PULPIT, RUSHES IN, FLOODING THE ANCIENT DAM AND STORMING ATLANTIS!



THE BASILEUS, ICARUS, BLAKE, MORTIMER, AND THE OTHERS HAVE REACHED A VAST HALL WHERE THE SURVIVORS OF THE ATLANTEAN PEOPLE HAVE GATHERED...



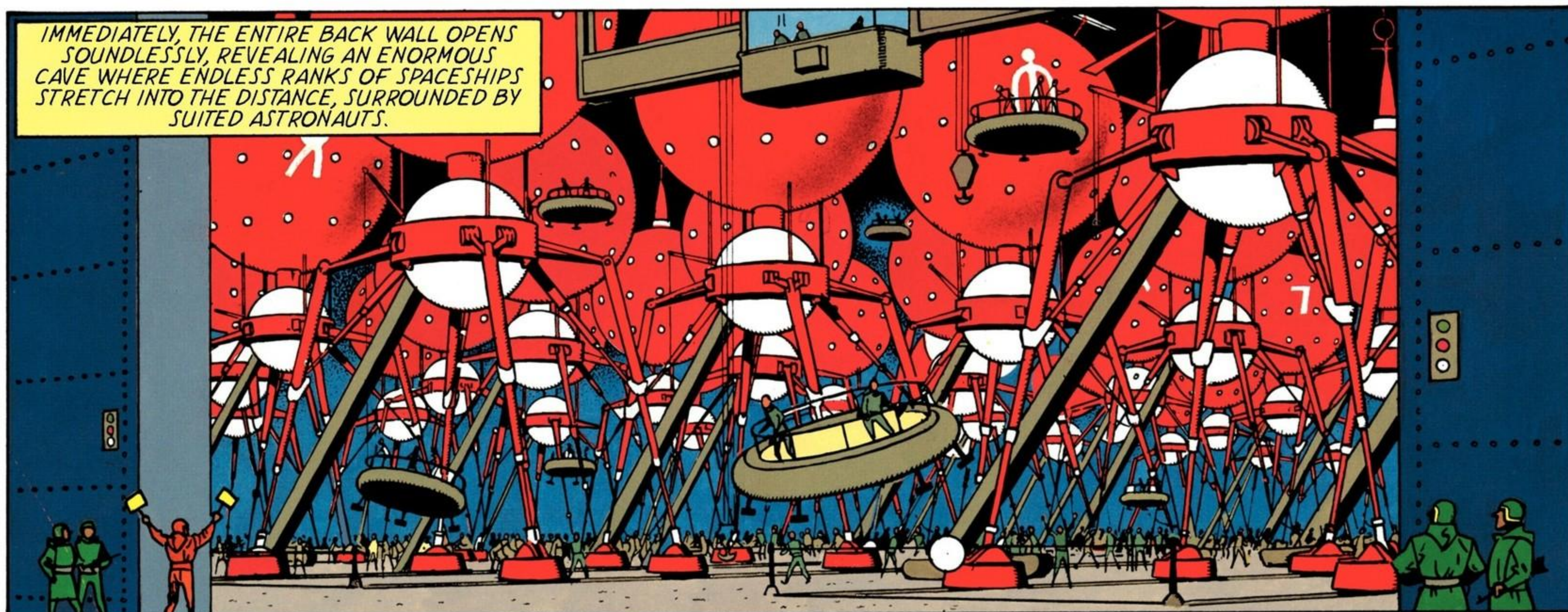
SPEAKING SOLEMNLY, THE SOVEREIGN BEGINS ADDRESSING THEM:

My friends! Very grave events have just forced me to move forward the date we had set as the closing of our underground life. Magon the traitor, by opening our city to the barbarians, unwittingly severed the last tie we had with this world! Therefore, our scientists are going to take us away from our empire, once more swallowed by the sea, and lead us to the other side of the galaxy and a more hospitable planet! Everything is ready. Our interplanetary disks have long since explored and prepared our path... You will follow your leaders and board the interstellar ships that await you, and soon we will once again live free, under a triple sun billions of leagues from here...



HAVING SPOKEN THUS, THE BASILEUS WALKS TO A PULPIT AND VERY DELIBERATELY PUTS HIS FINGER ON A BUTTON...

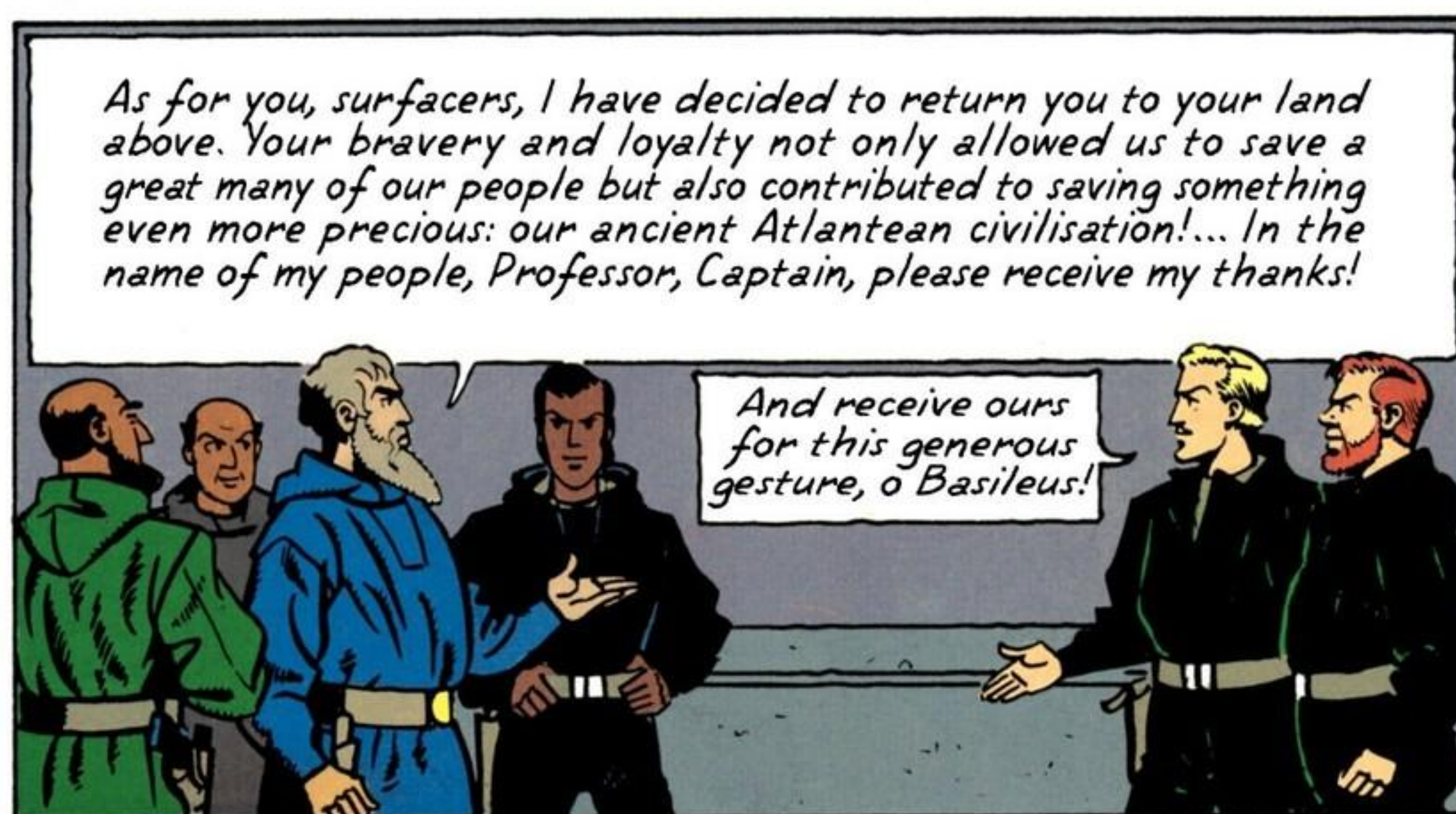




IMMEDIATELY, THE ENTIRE BACK WALL OPENS SOUNDLESSLY, REVEALING AN ENORMOUS CAVE WHERE ENDLESS RANKS OF SPACESHIPS STRETCH INTO THE DISTANCE, SURROUNDED BY SUITED ASTRONAUTS.



Go, my friends. Go with order and discipline. Your trials are nearly over!...



As for you, surfacers, I have decided to return you to your land above. Your bravery and loyalty not only allowed us to save a great many of our people but also contributed to saving something even more precious: our ancient Atlantean civilisation!... In the name of my people, Professor, Captain, please receive my thanks!

And receive ours for this generous gesture, o Basileus!



Icarus, take these good men to the place you know of and make sure they see the light of day again!... Go! Time is of the essence! Farewell, and a safe trip back to your world!

Farewell, Basileus. And may your endeavours succeed!



AND WHILE THE ATLANTEANS, FULL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE, EMBARK TOWARDS THEIR NEW DESTINY, THE PRINCE HURRIEDLY LEADS BLAKE AND MORTIMER AWAY...

This way—come on!



MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE, THE OCEAN CONTINUES ITS WORK OF DEVASTATION, AND ITS UNSTOPPABLE WATERS HAVE ALREADY HALF-FLOODED THE CAPITAL CITY. CAUGHT INSIDE THE RAPIDLY FILLING PALACE, THE CURSED ARCHITECTS OF THE TERRIBLE DISASTER ARE STRUGGLING TO SAVE THEIR LIVES!

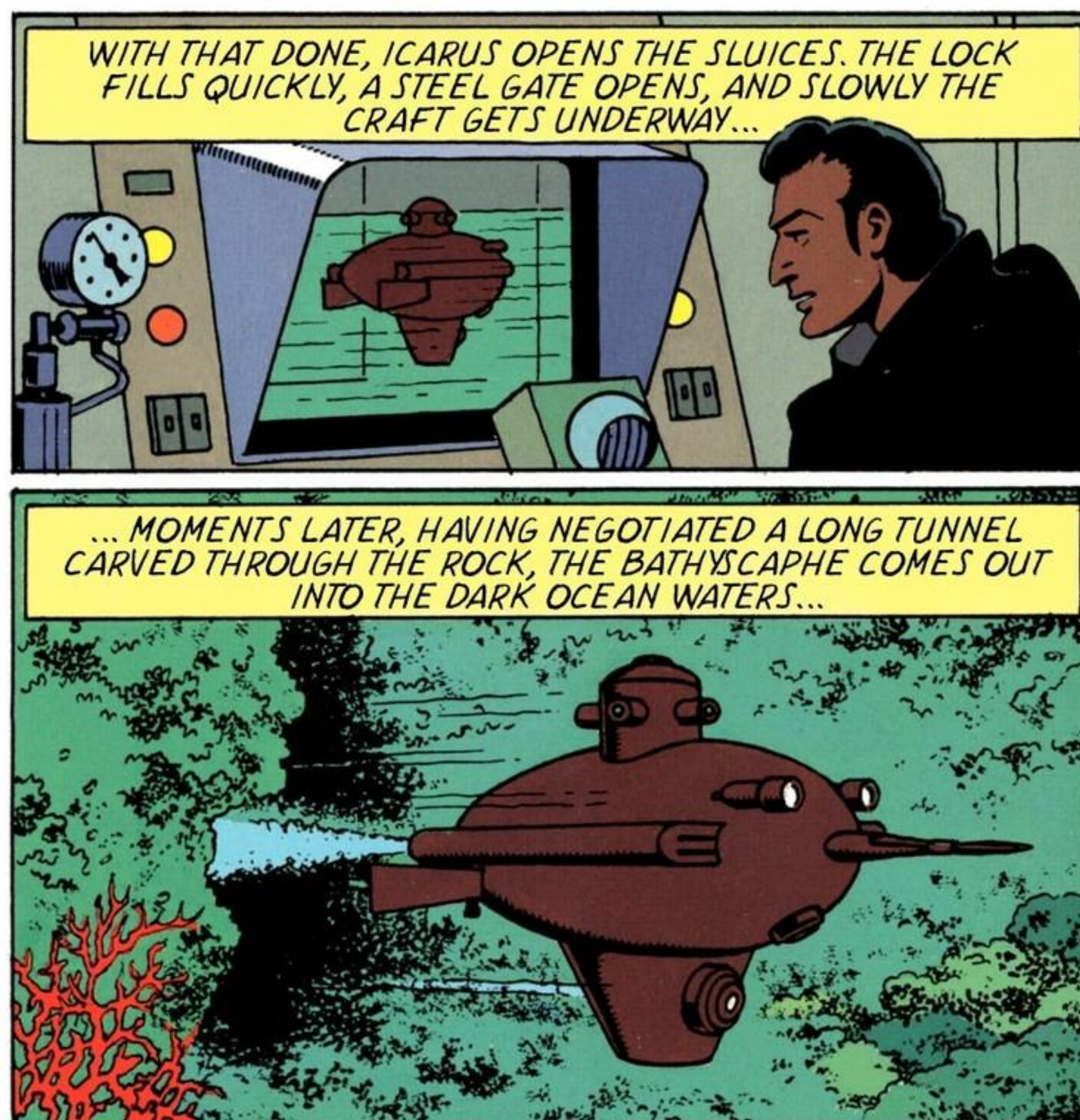
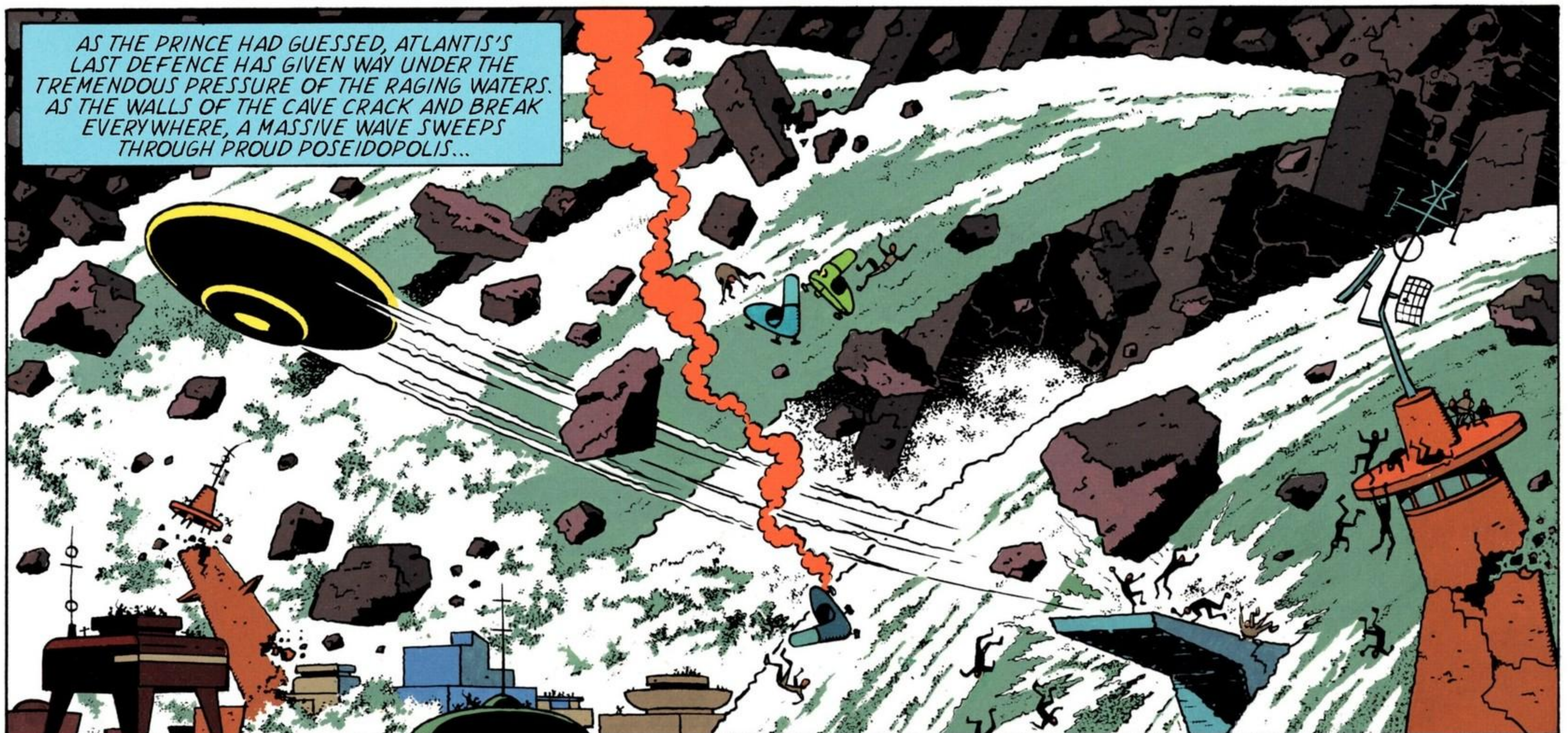
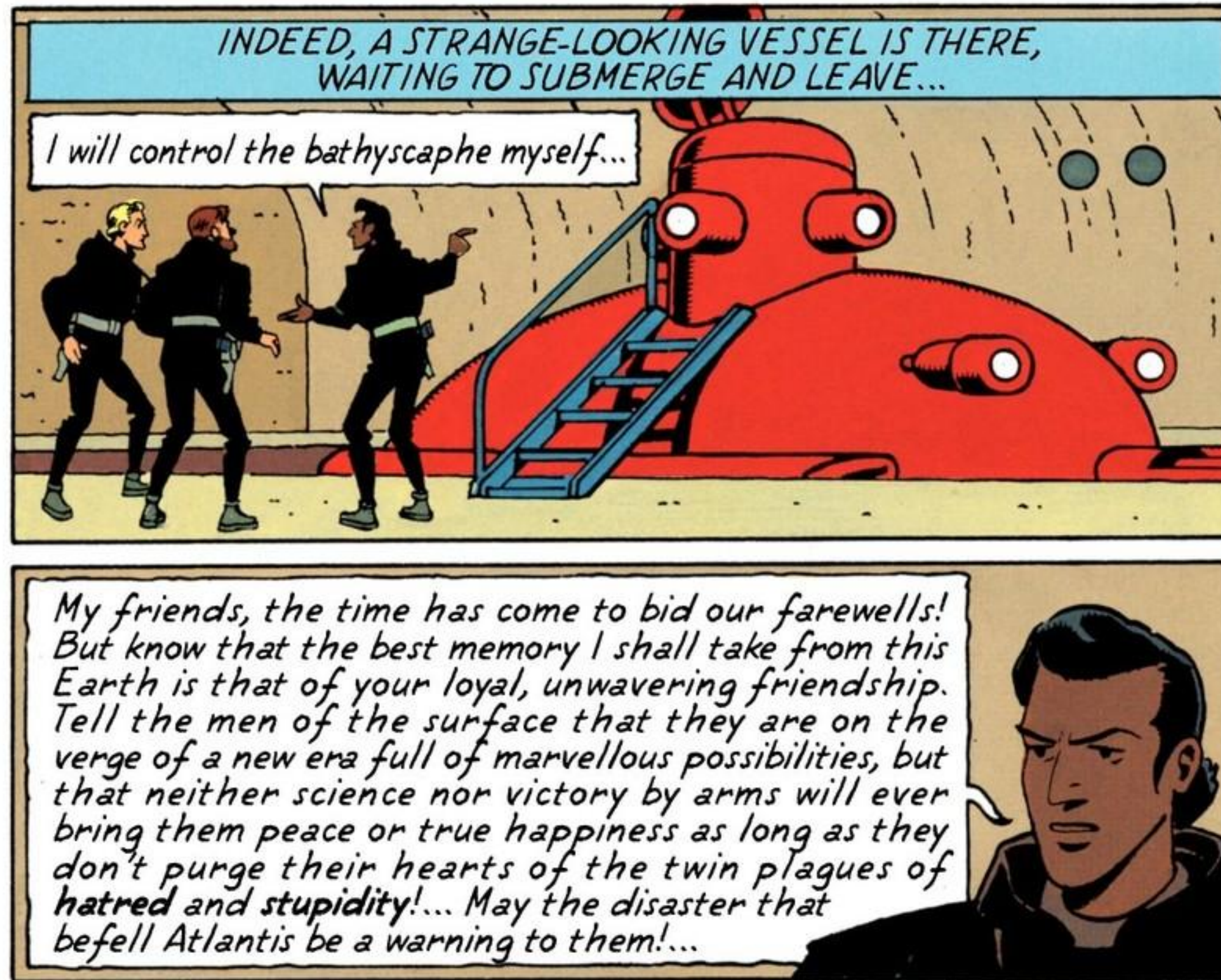
Help me, great Hurakan! Hear me! Your son Tlalac orders you to rescue him!...

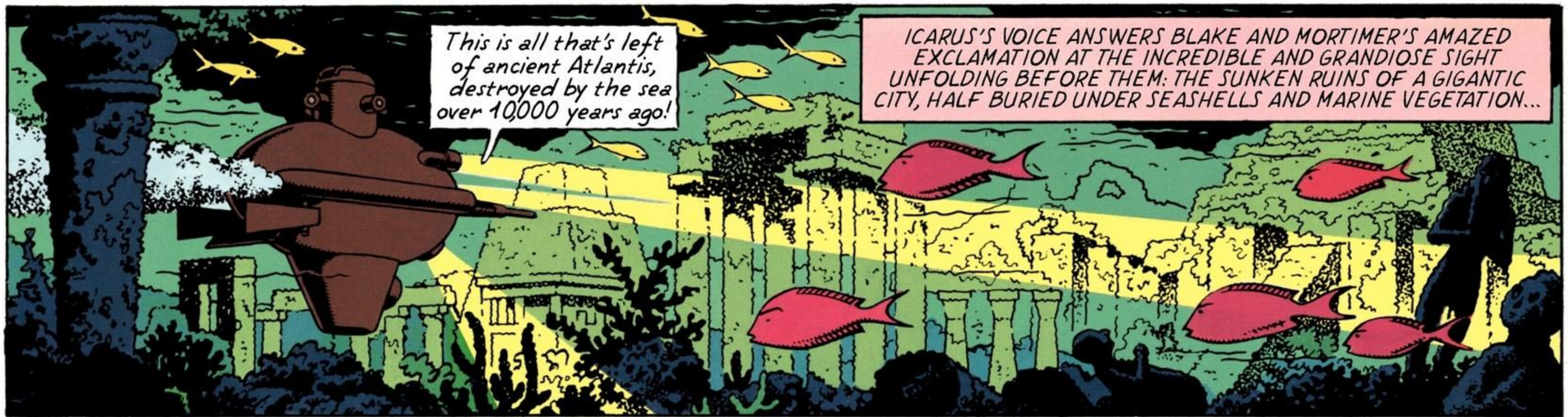


Back! Away, ocean!... I am Magon, the basileus!... You will obey me!!! Save me, guards!!!



Damnation!... Drowning like a rat!... Ah, I must keep looking!... Surely there must be a way out somewhere!?!...





This is all that's left of ancient Atlantis, destroyed by the sea over 10,000 years ago!

ICARUS'S VOICE ANSWERS BLAKE AND MORTIMER'S AMAZED EXCLAMATION AT THE INCREDIBLE AND GRANDIOSE SIGHT UNFOLDING BEFORE THEM: THE SUNKEN RUINS OF A GIGANTIC CITY, HALF BURIED UNDER SEASHELLS AND MARINE VEGETATION...



FASCINATED, AS THEY PASS, THE TWO MEN LOOK AT THE REMAINS OF A PRODIGIOUS PAST, SPRINGING FROM THE DARK DEEPS LIKE SO MANY GHOSTS...



BUT, AS IT IS MOVING DOWN AN ANCIENT STREET, THE SUBMERSIBLE IS SUDDENLY CAUGHT IN A TERRIFIC EDDY AND FURIOUSLY SHAKEN.

What's happening?

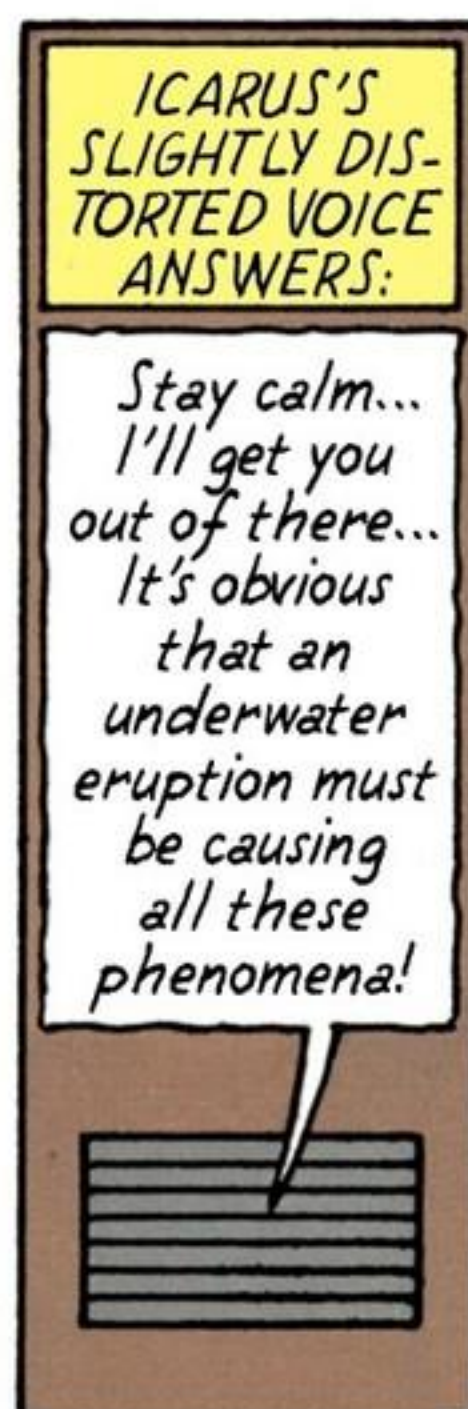


TOSSED ABOUT LIKE A TOY BOAT, THE FRAIL VESSEL SCRAPES THE NOW WOBBLING WALLS; SUDDENLY, ONE OF THEM TILTS OVER AND FALLS ON TOP OF IT...



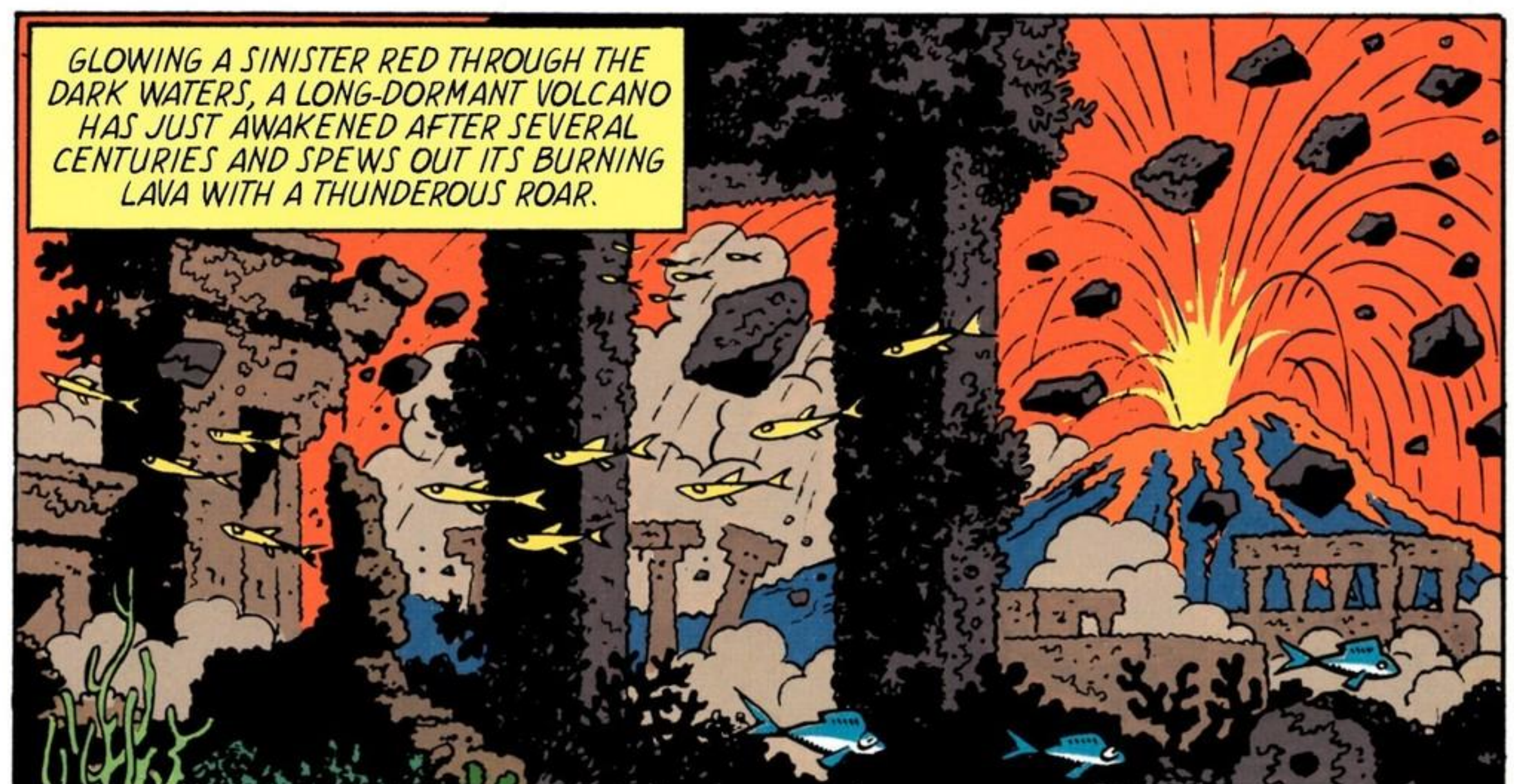
STUCK BENEATH THE MASSIVE RUBBLE, IT IS IMMOBILISED, AND A WORRIED BLAKE EXCLAIMS FOR THEIR FRIEND'S EAR:

What's going on? We're not moving anymore!



ICARUS'S SLIGHTLY DISTORTED VOICE ANSWERS:

Stay calm... I'll get you out of there... It's obvious that an underwater eruption must be causing all these phenomena!



GLOWING A SINISTER RED THROUGH THE DARK WATERS, A LONG-DORMANT VOLCANO HAS JUST AWAKENED AFTER SEVERAL CENTURIES AND SPEWS OUT ITS BURNING LAVA WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR.



OUR HEROES' SITUATION IS DIRE, BUT THANKS TO SOME SKILFUL MANOEUVRING BY THE PRINCE, THE BATHYSCAPHE IS FINALLY FREE...

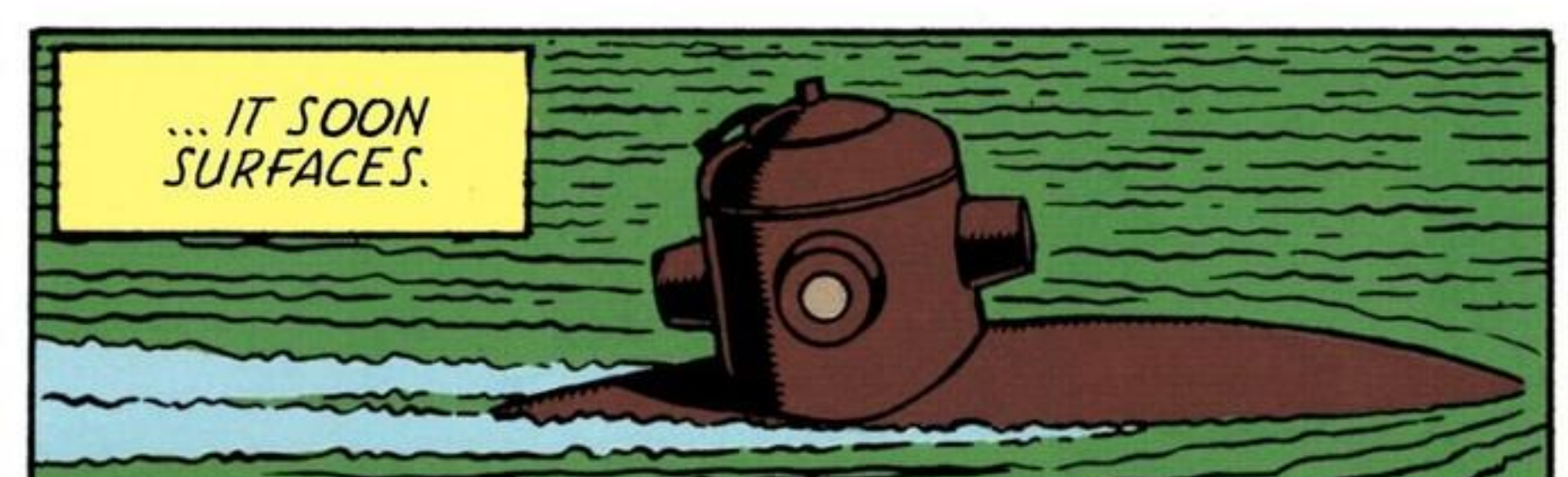
There!!

At last!!!

Good grief! That was close!...



IT IMMEDIATELY RESUMES ITS PROGRESS THROUGH THE CHOPPY SEA AND, ASCENDING RAPIDLY...



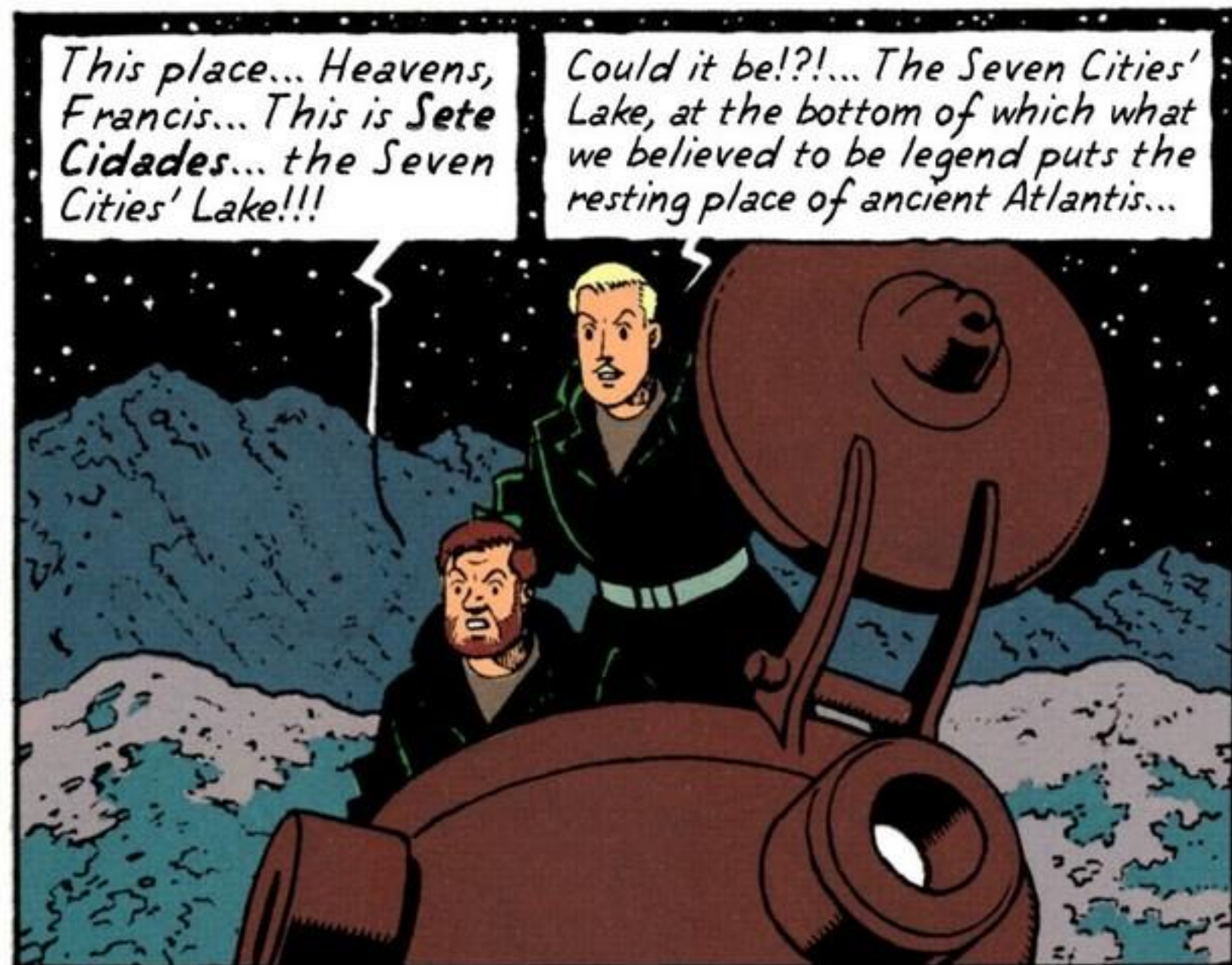
... IT SOON SURFACES.



UNBUCKLING IN SECONDS, BLAKE AND MORTIMER DASH TO THE KIOSK, WHICH OPENS RIGHT AWAY.

By Jove! Our sky!

And the good old surface! Hey! What... look over there!...



This place... Heavens, Francis... This is *Sete Cidades*... the Seven Cities' Lake!!!

Could it be?!... The Seven Cities' Lake, at the bottom of which what we believed to be legend puts the resting place of ancient Atlantis...



BUT, COMING FROM DOWN BELOW, THE PRINCE'S URGENT CALL BRINGS THEM BACK TO REALITY...

Hurry off the boat, my friends!... The command chamber is starting to flood!!



THE SUBMERSIBLE HAVING SAILED NEARER TO THE SHORE, OUR FRIENDS SWIFTLY OBEY...

There!

Hnh!



AS THEY STAND ON THE SHORE, UNCERTAIN OF WHAT TO DO NOW, THEY HEAR THE PRINCE SPEAK TO THEM FOR THE LAST TIME...

Head for the surrounding heights and wait! If, at the ninth hour, nothing has happened, then it will mean that our grand design has failed. And now, for the last time: Farewell!

Adieu, Prince... and good luck!

Farewell, Icarus. God be with you!



WITH THAT, THE HATCH ON THE KIOSK CLOSES SOUNDLESSLY, AND...

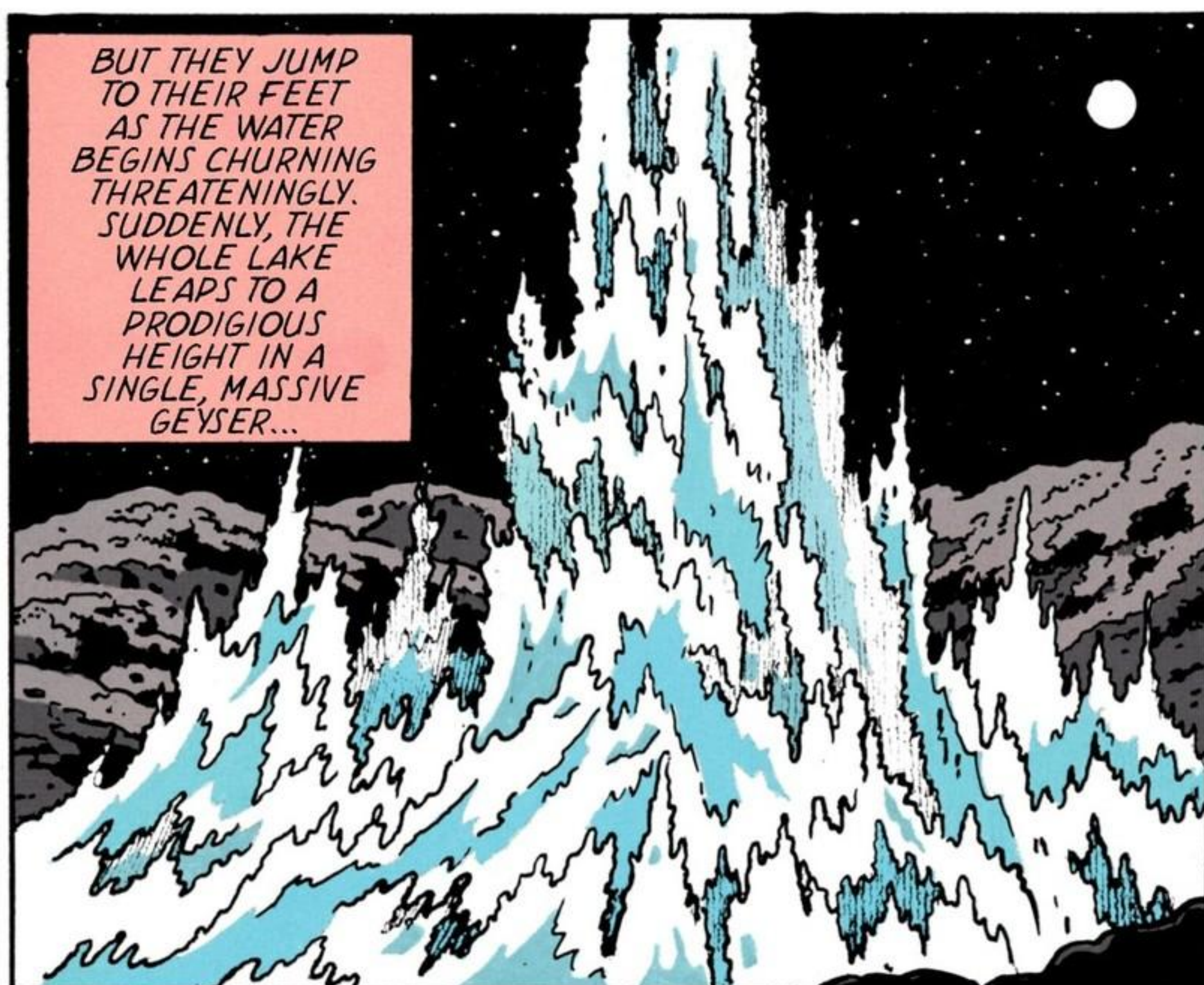
... THE BATHYSCAPHE, DIVING IMMEDIATELY, DISAPPEARS BELOW THE WATERS.



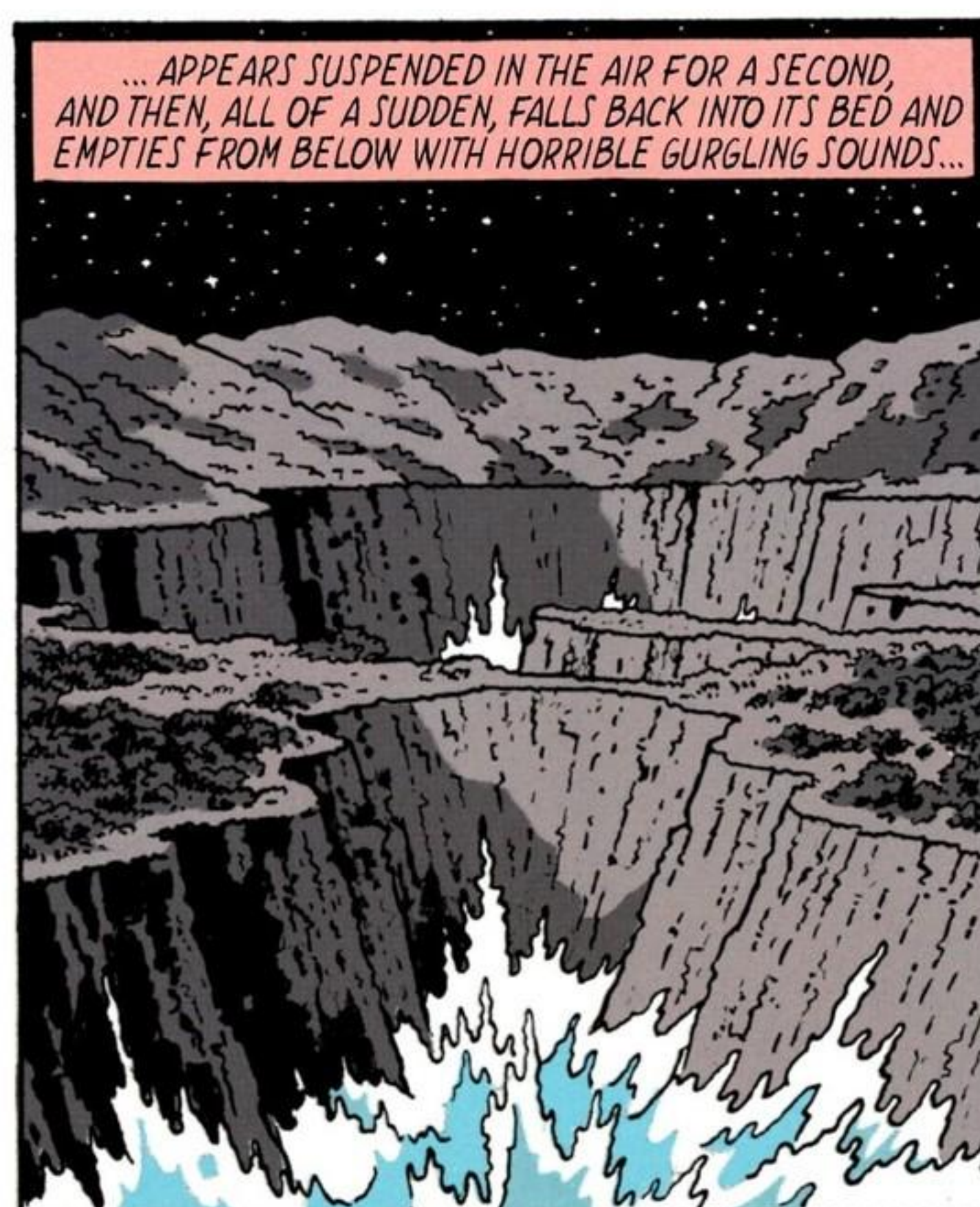
THE TWO COMPANIONS GAZE FOR A MOMENT AT THE VESSEL'S WAKE, THEN, WALKING BRISKLY, START UP THE STEEP PATH THAT OPENS BEFORE THEM.



AFTER A STRENUOUS CLIMB, BLAKE AND MORTIMER HAVE REACHED THE PLACE PRINCE ICARUS POINTED OUT TO THEM. EXHAUSTED, THEY SIT DOWN ON THE GRASS AND SILENTLY OBSERVE THE MYSTERIOUS LAKE THAT STRETCHES AT THEIR FEET, THEIR ONLY COMPANY THE LOW RUMBLING OF THE TITANIC FORCES THAT ARE TURNING THE INSIDE OF THE EARTH UPSIDE DOWN, CAUSING THE GROUND TO SHUDDER...



BUT THEY JUMP TO THEIR FEET AS THE WATER BEGINS CHURNING THREATENINGLY. SUDDENLY, THE WHOLE LAKE LEAPS TO A PRODIGIOUS HEIGHT IN A SINGLE, MASSIVE GEYSER...

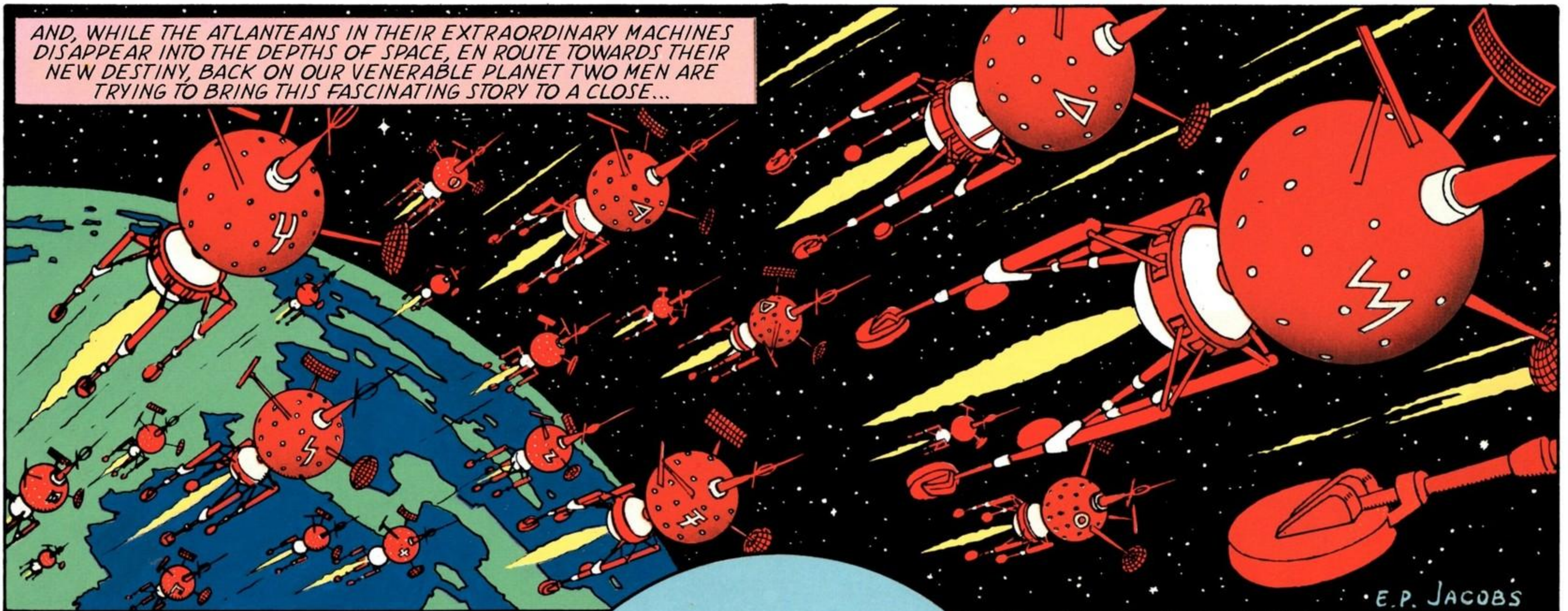
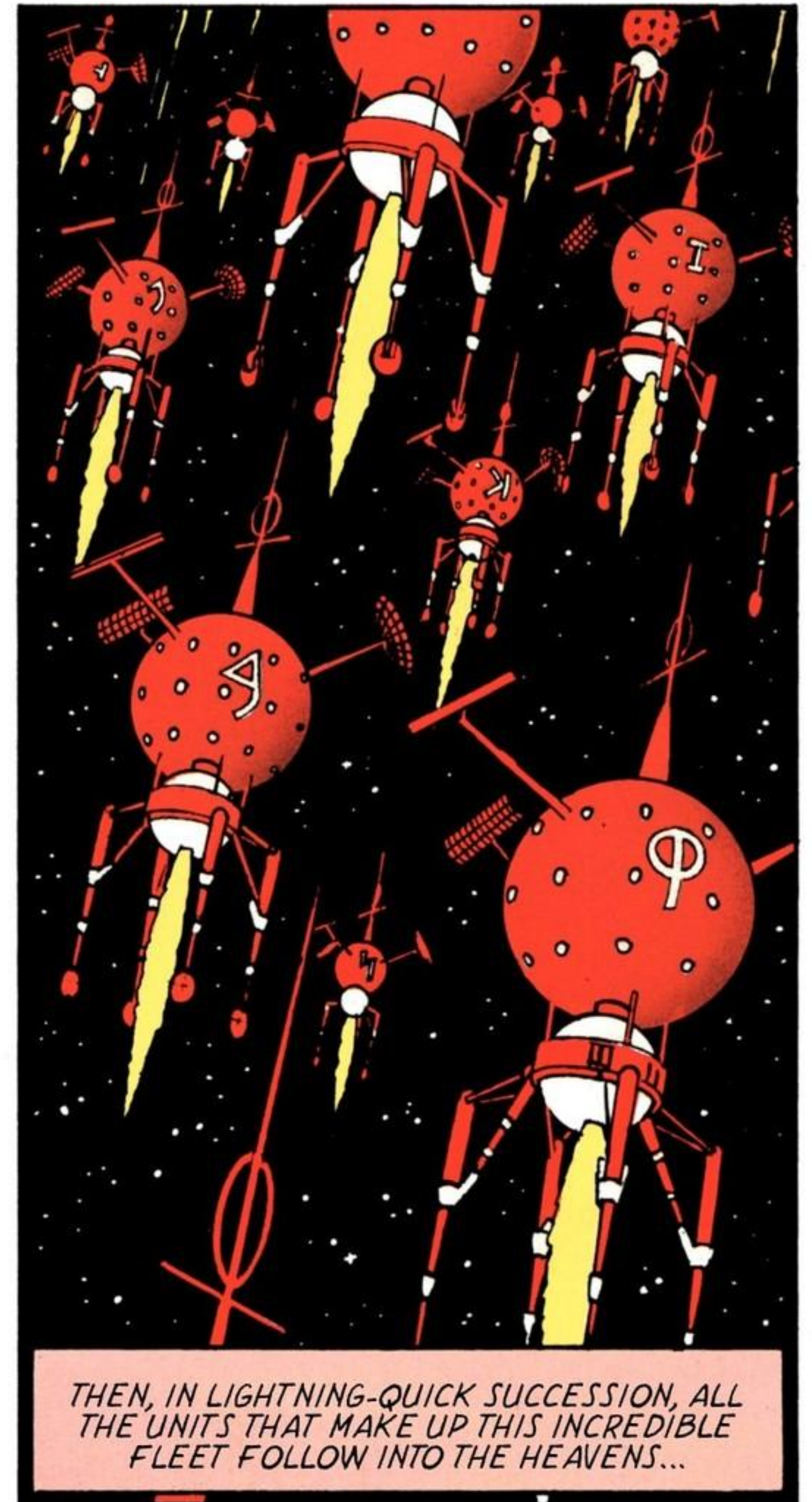
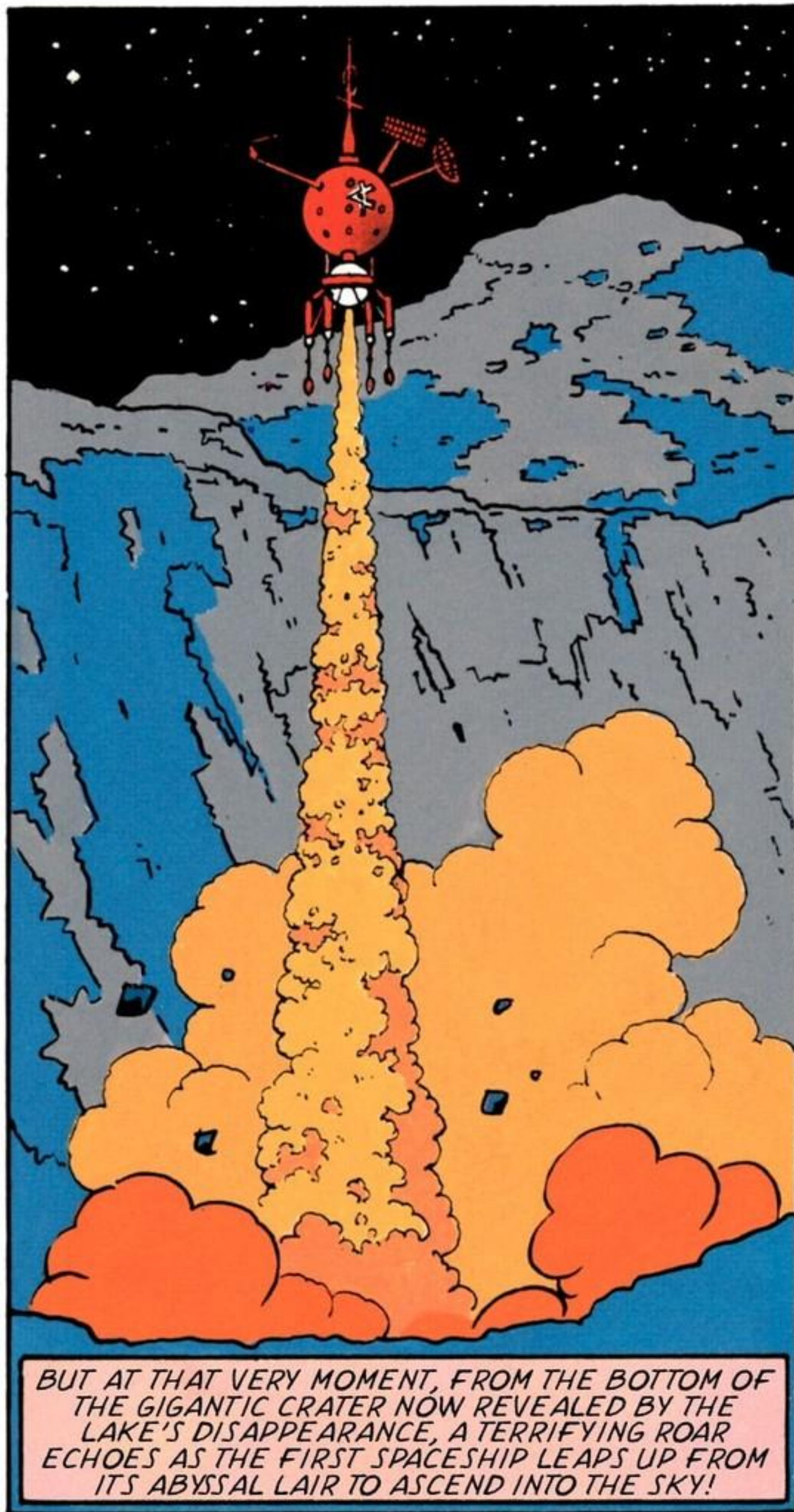


... APPEARS SUSPENDED IN THE AIR FOR A SECOND, AND THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, FALLS BACK INTO ITS BED AND EMPTIES FROM BELOW WITH HORRIBLE GURGLING SOUNDS...



Good Lord! What's happening?!?...

Atlantis must have collapsed!! They're doomed!!!



And so concludes this incredible adventure. And the millenia-old mystery of Atlantis is finally solved!... What will the sceptics say when...

My dear fellow, don't get your hopes up! No one will believe us! They'll just say that we put our personal interpretation on a simple underwater earthquake. They may even accuse us of perpetrating a hoax, or of having had a shared hallucination, or who knows what else!... And, to be fair, how could we hold it against them!?!

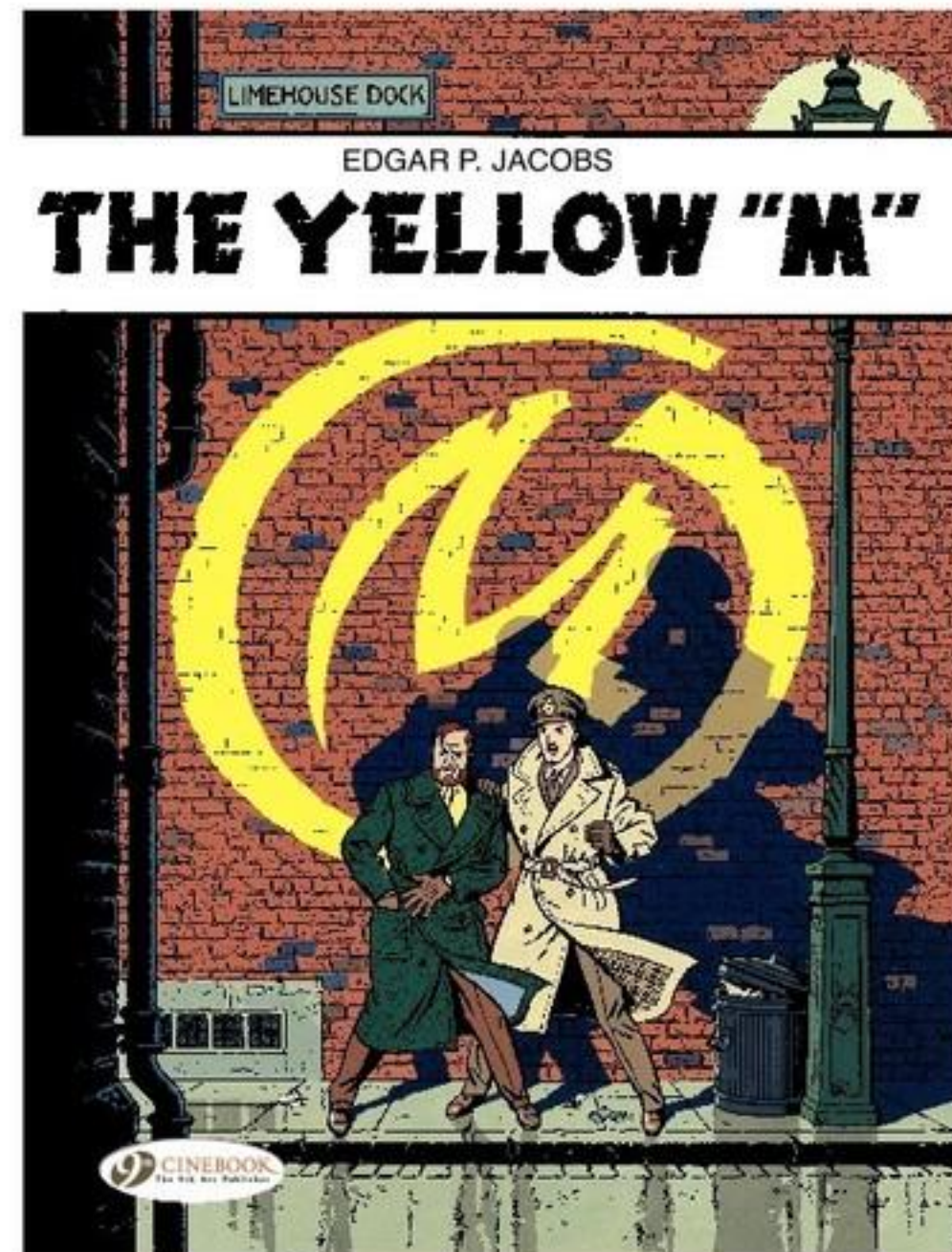


THE END

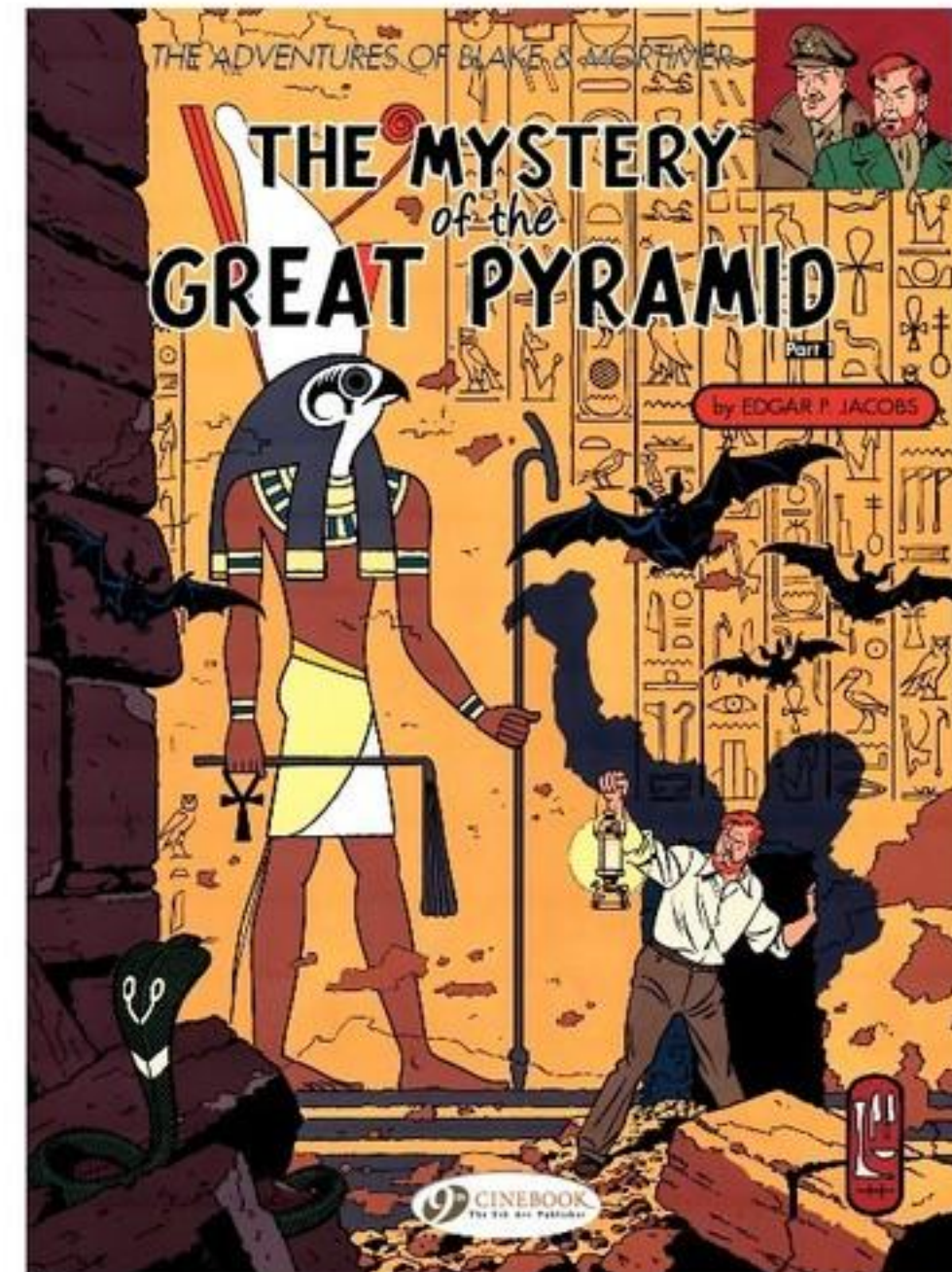
THE END



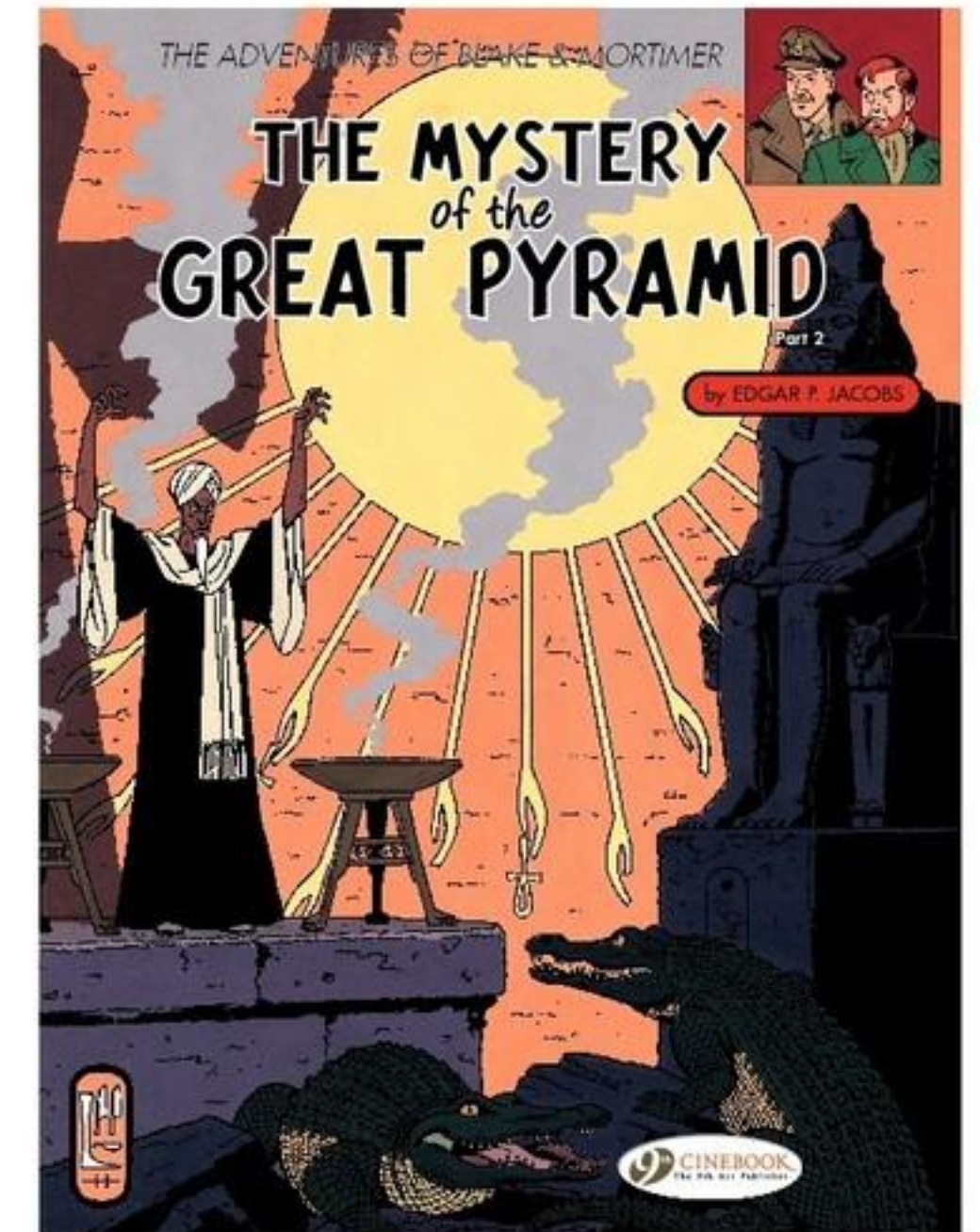
THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER



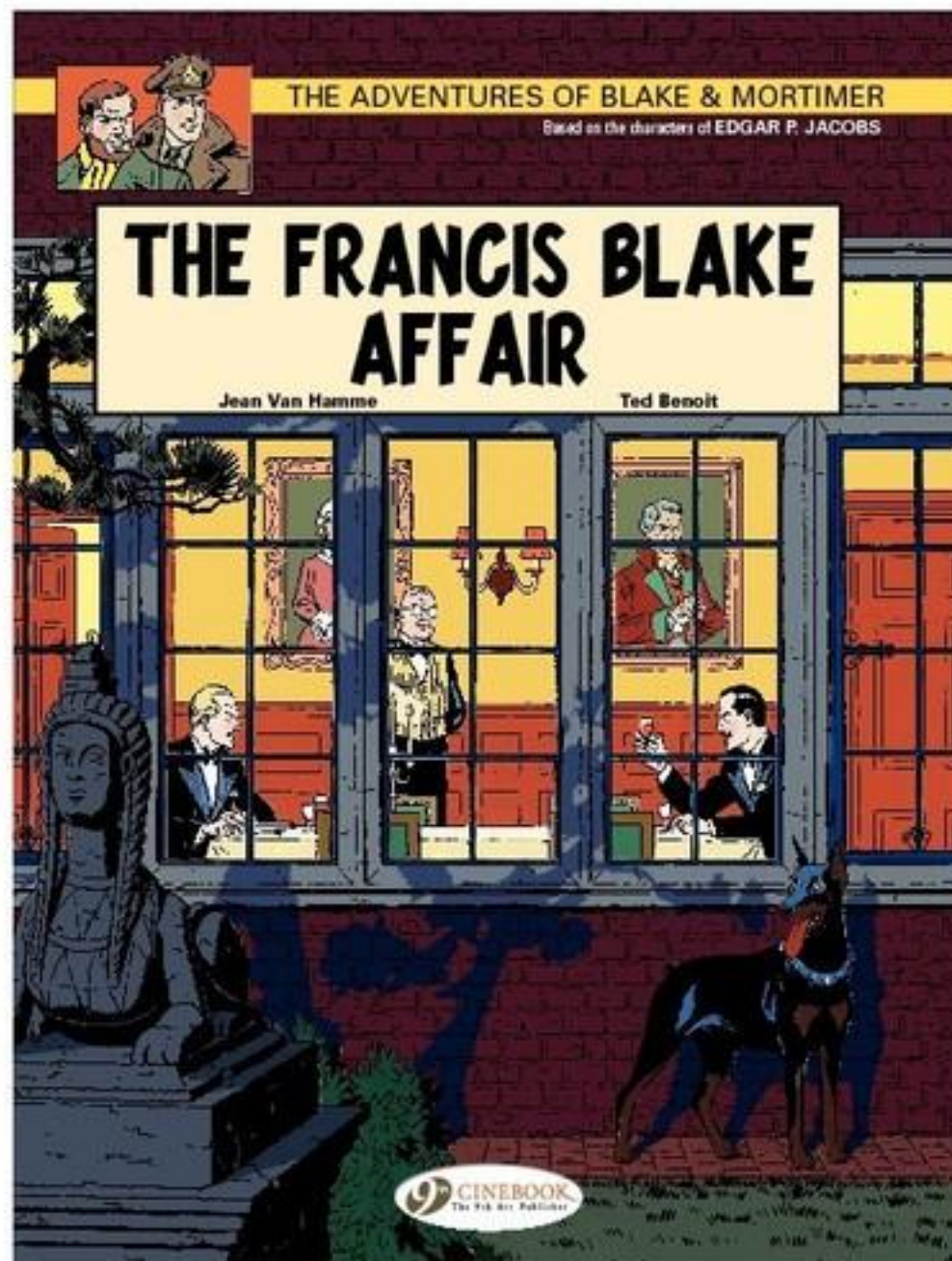
1 The Yellow "M"
EDGAR P. JACOBS



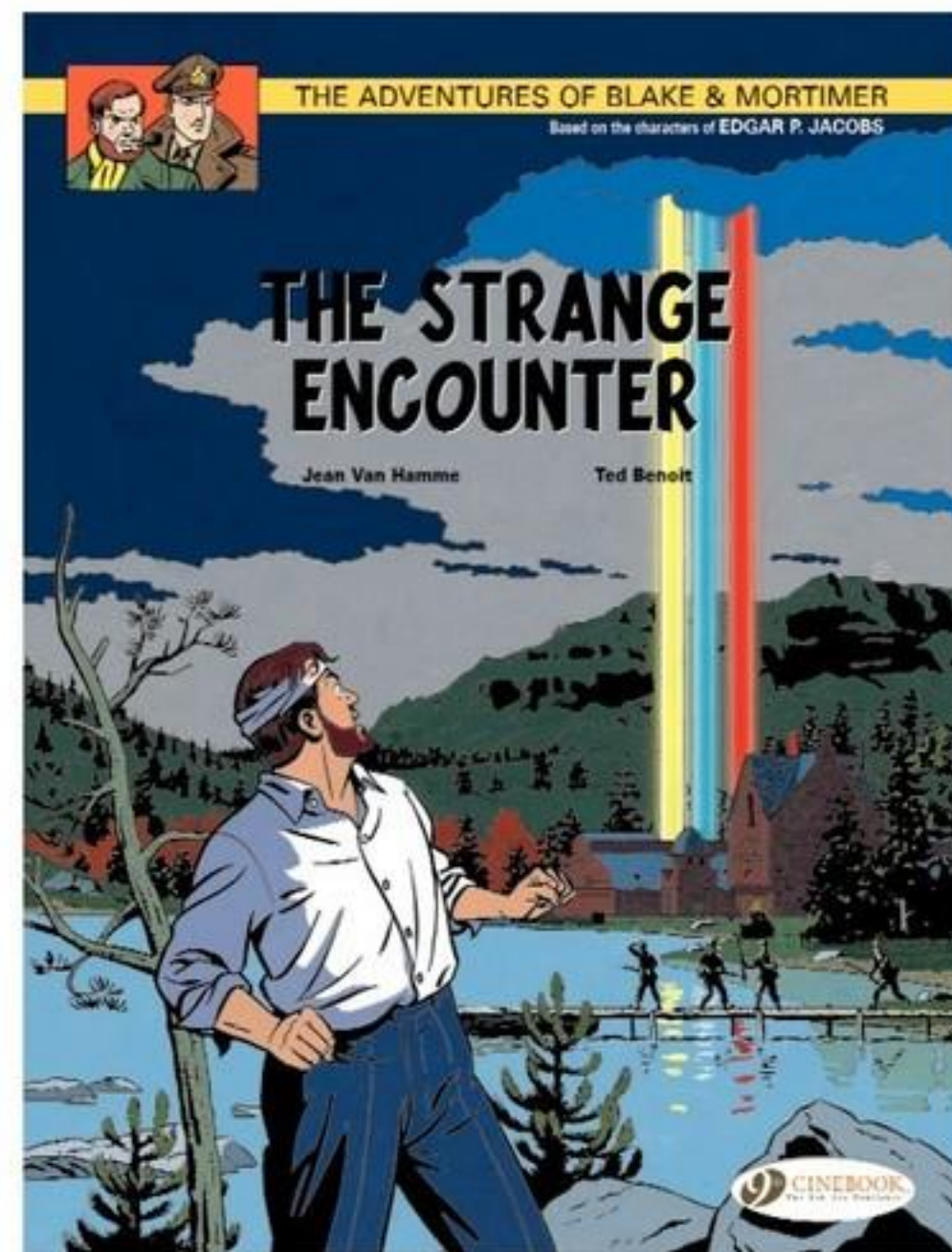
2 The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



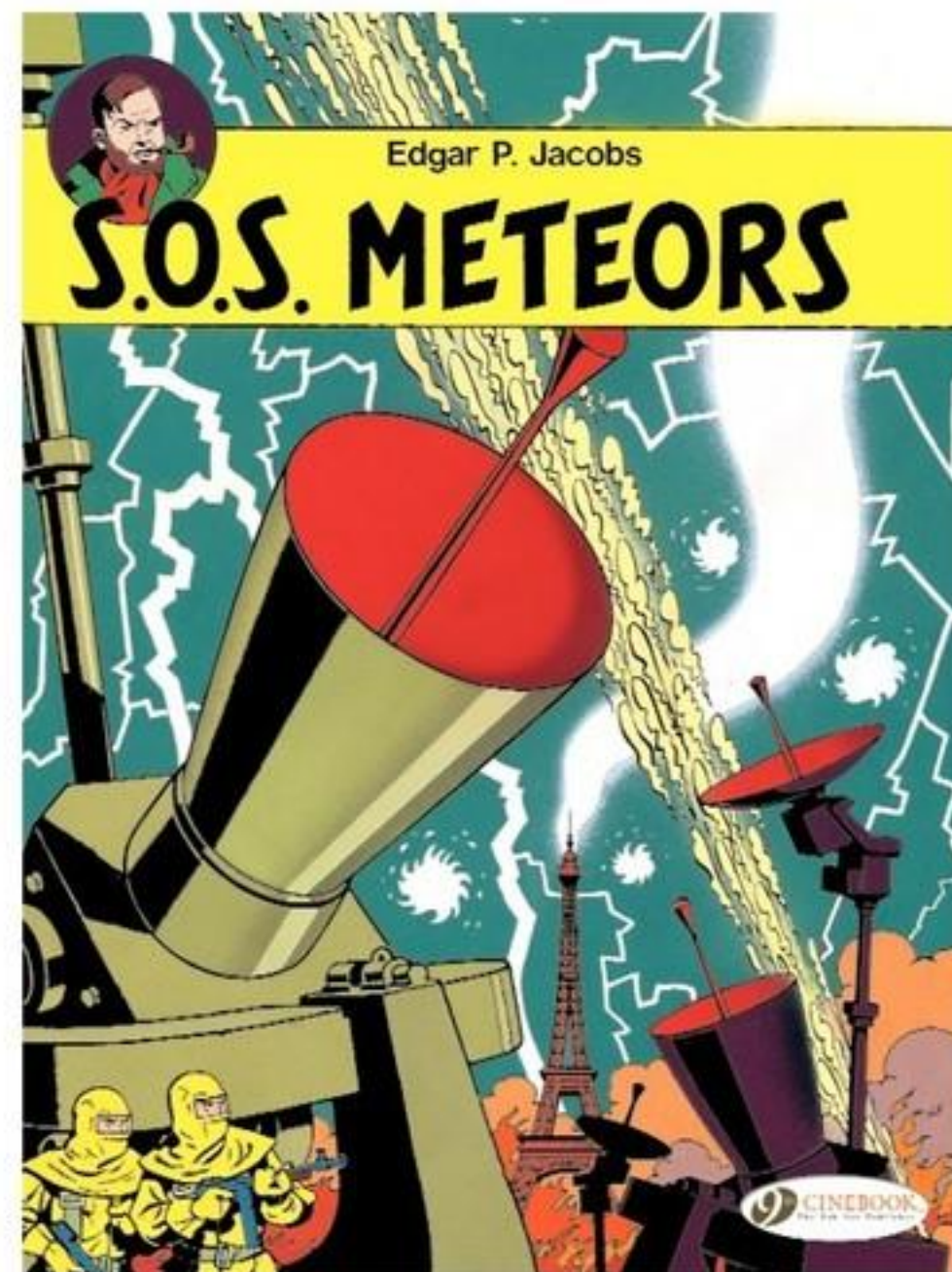
3 The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



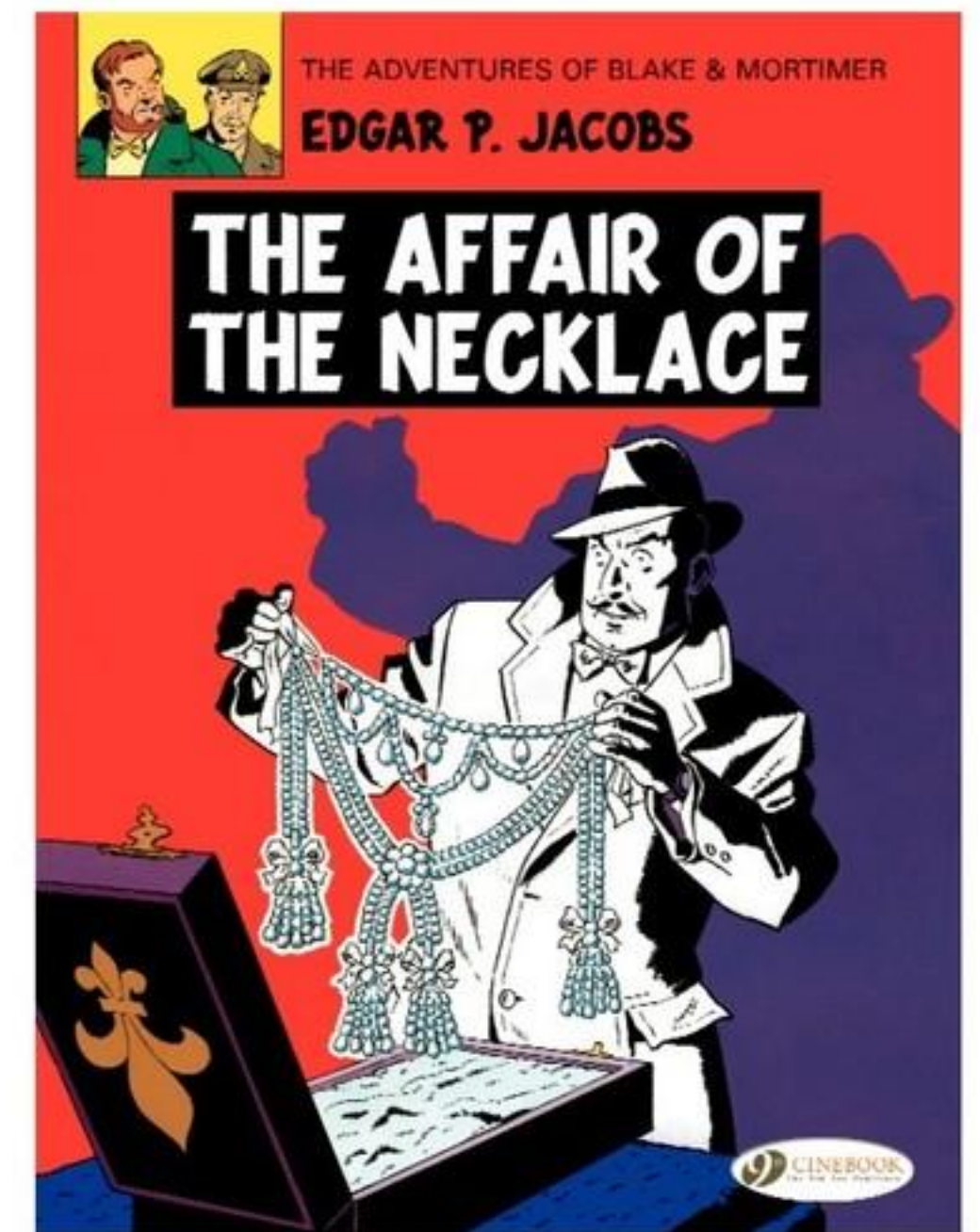
4 The Francis Blake Affair
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



5 The Strange Encounter
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



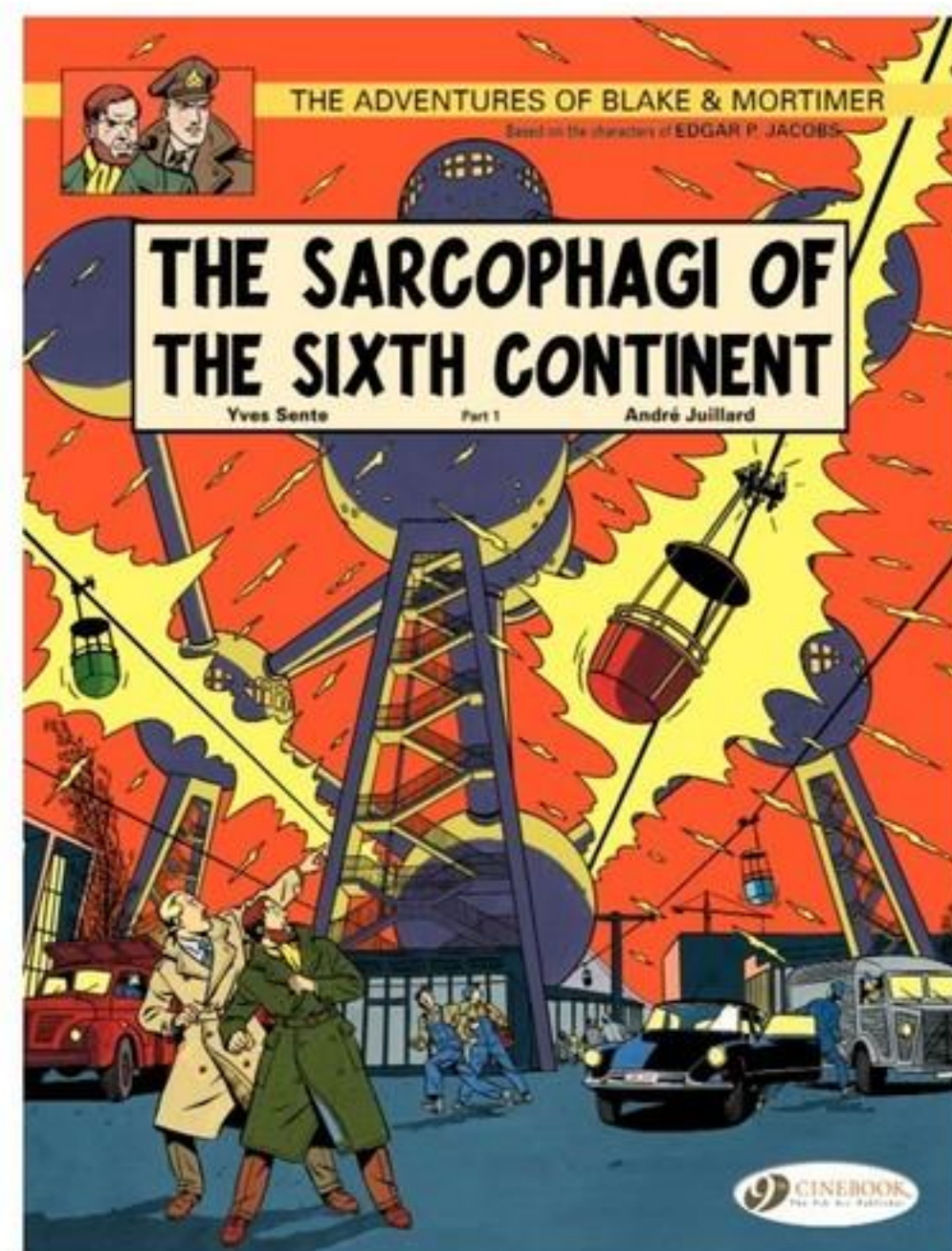
6 S.O.S. Meteors
EDGAR P. JACOBS



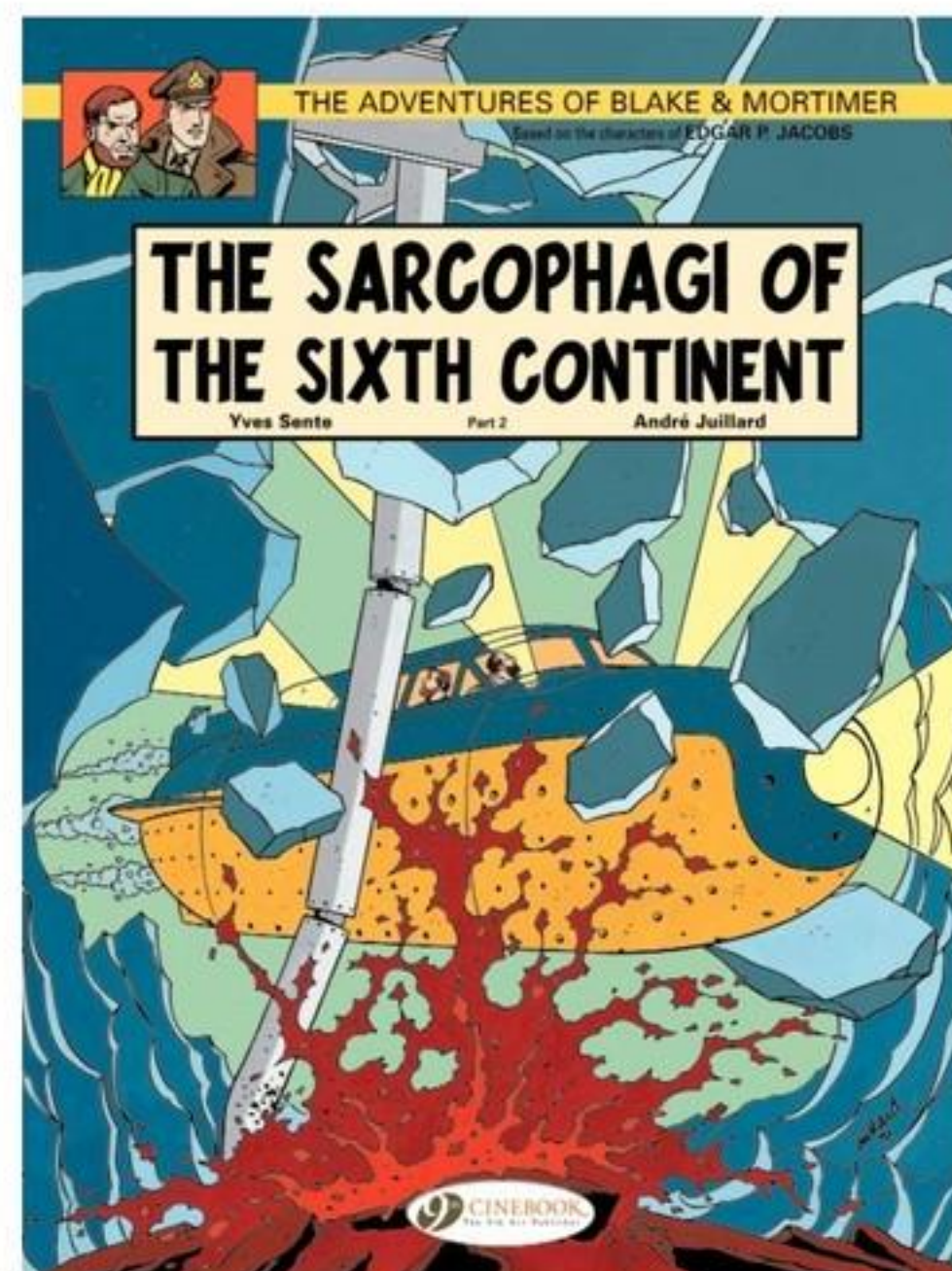
7 The Affair of the Necklace
EDGAR P. JACOBS



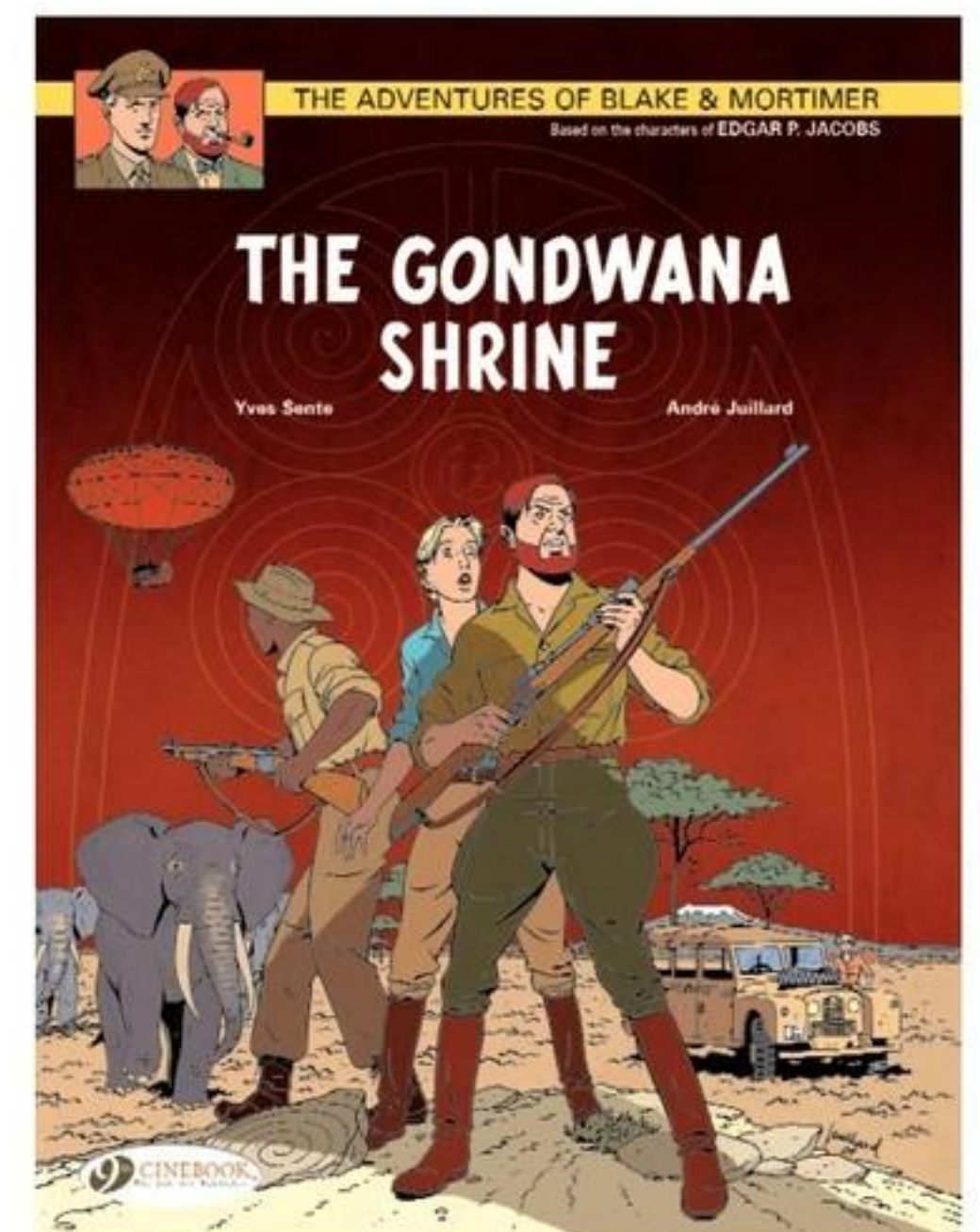
8 The Voronov Plot
SENTE - JUILLARD



9 The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1
SENTE - JUILLARD

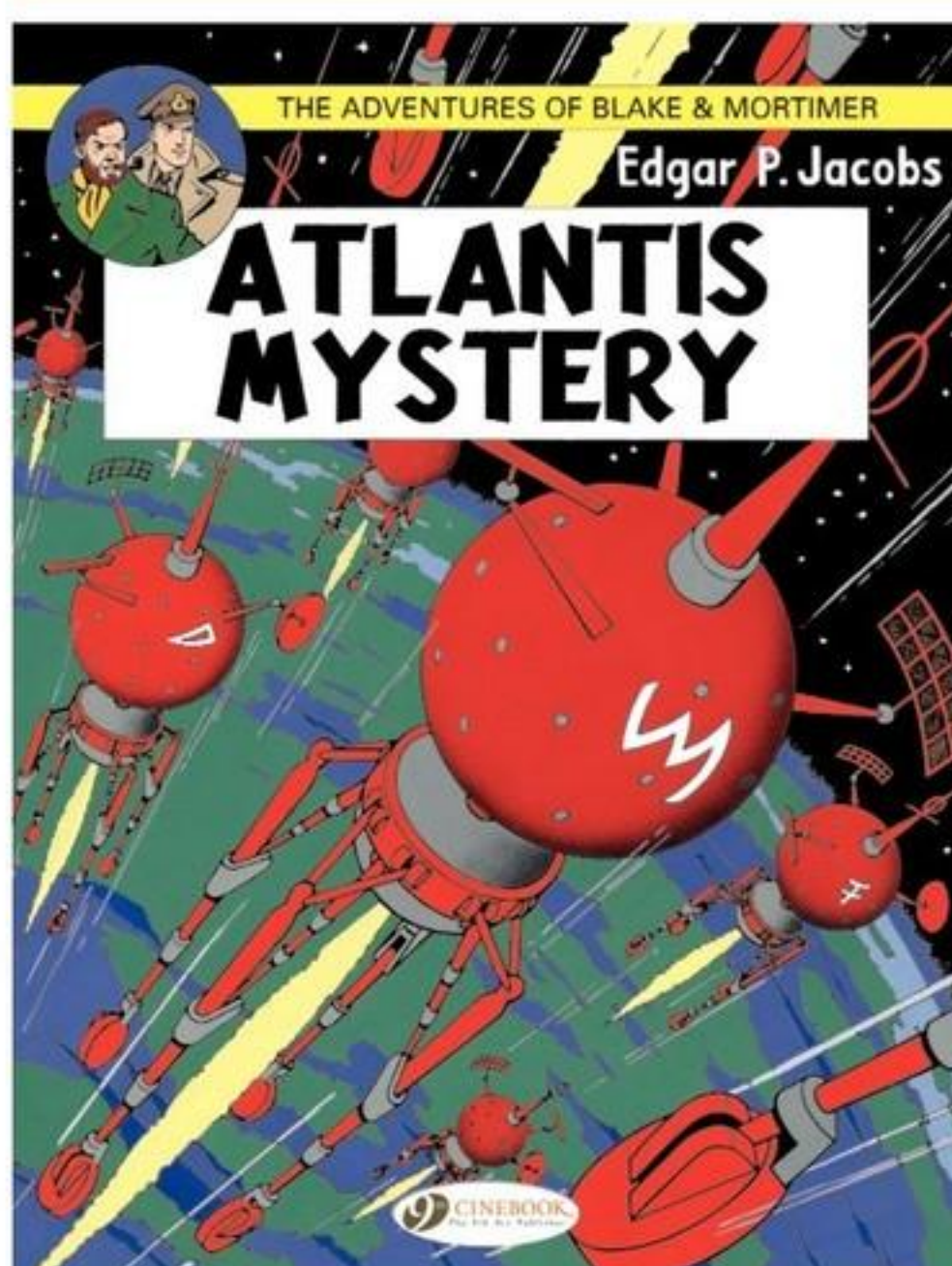


10 The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2
SENTE - JUILLARD

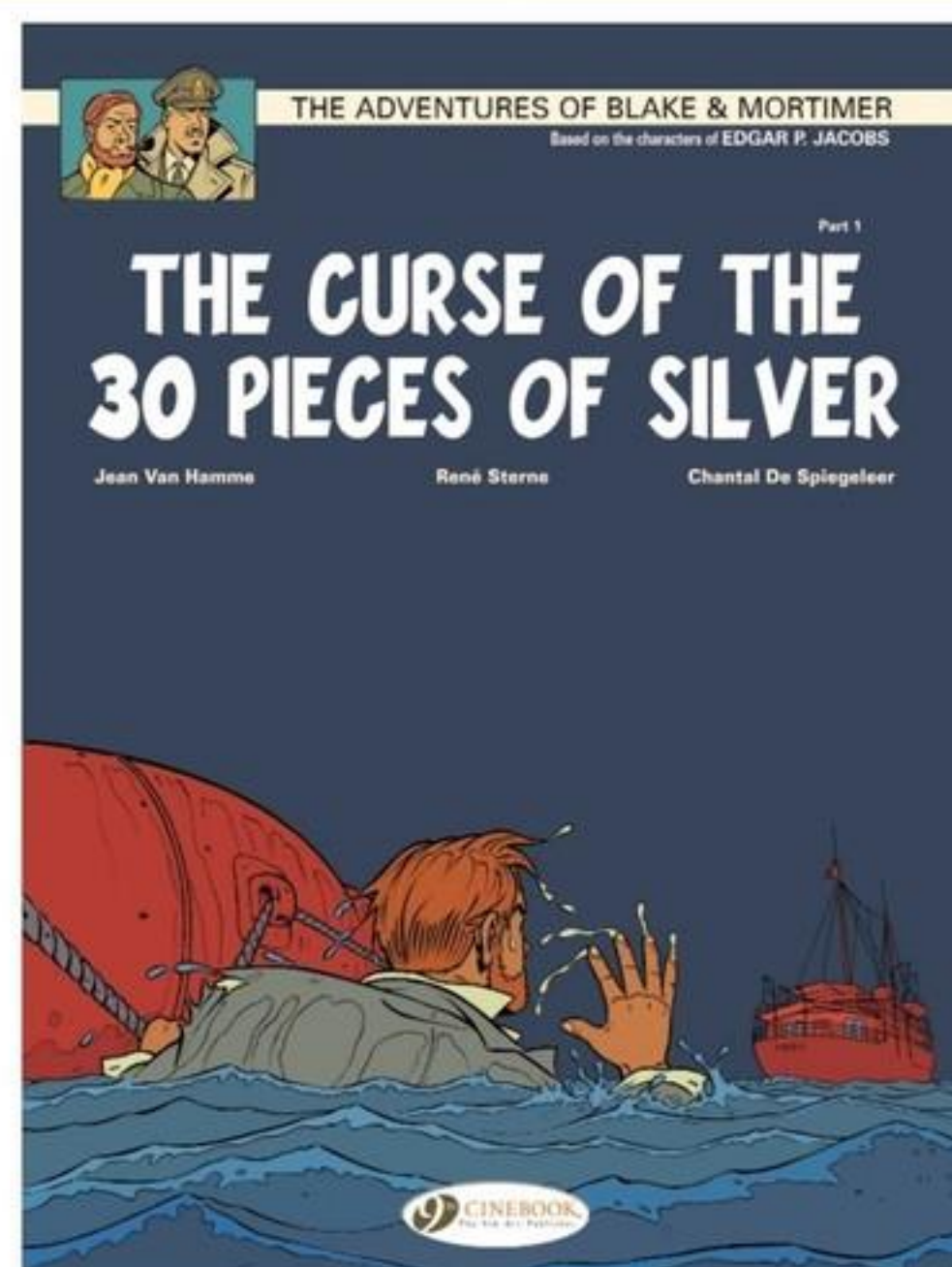


11 The Gondwana Shrine
SENTE - JUILLARD

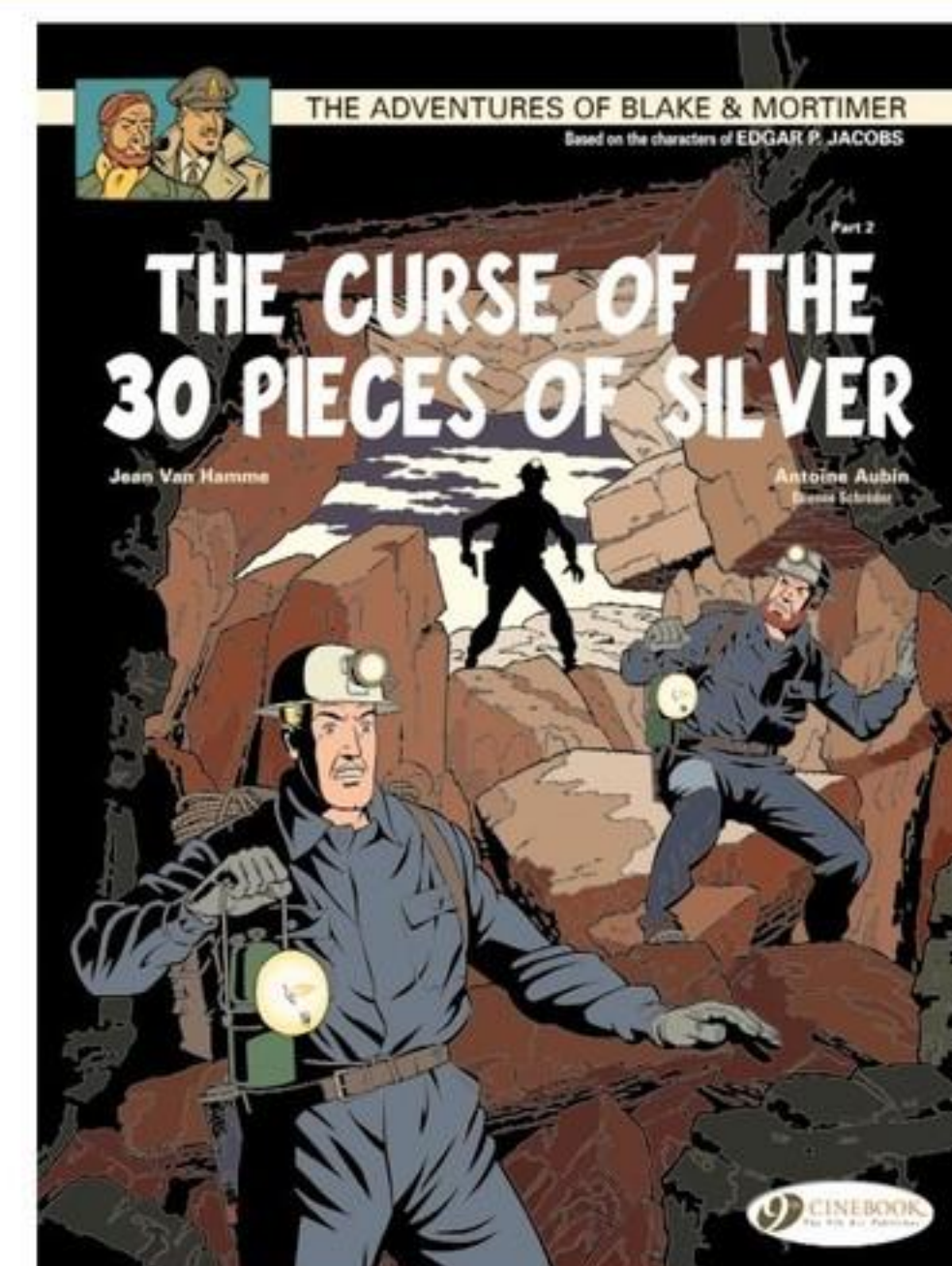
2012



12 Atlantis Mystery
EDGAR P. JACOBS

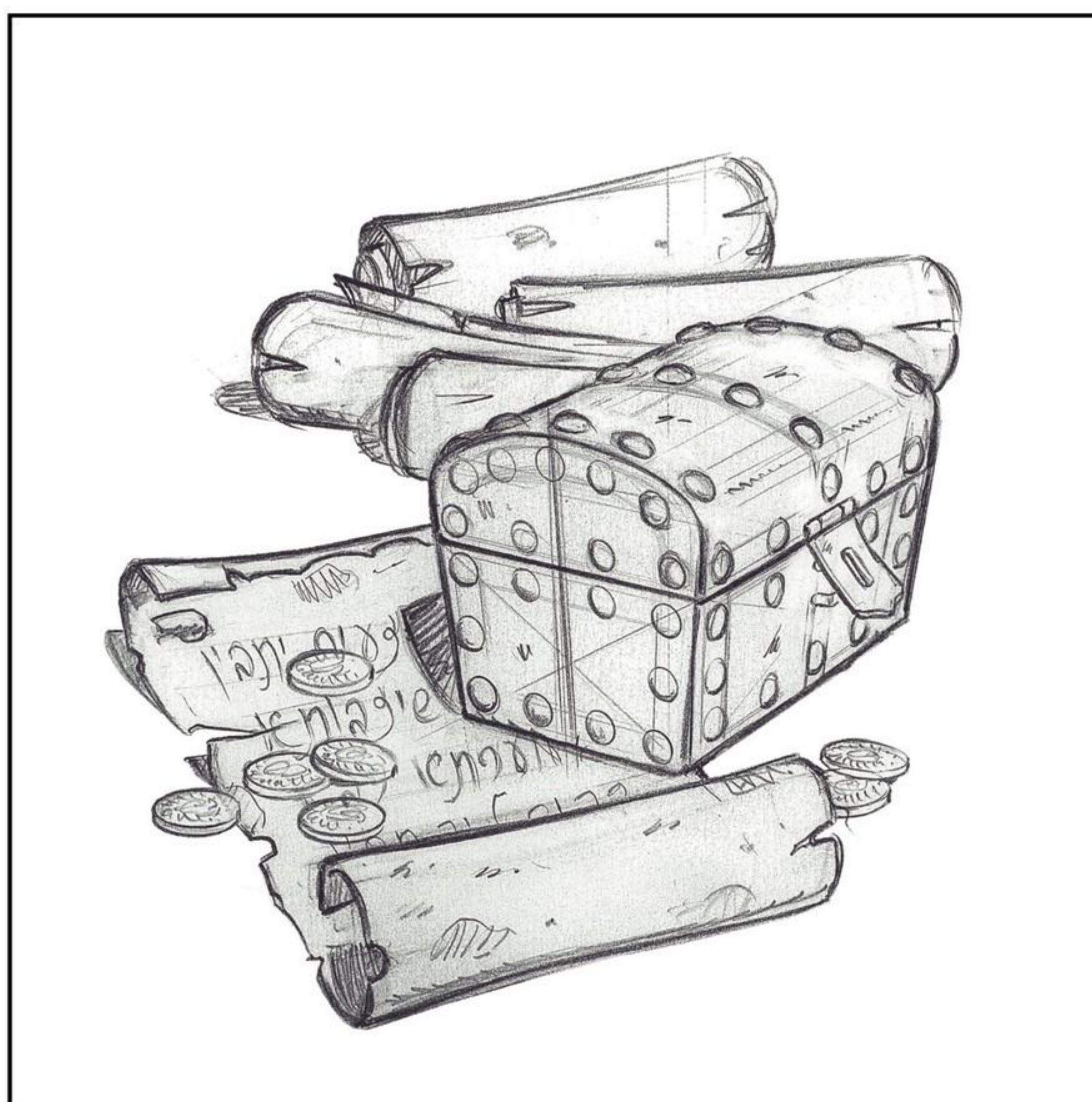


13 The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 1
VAN HAMME - STERNE - DE SPIEGELEER



14 The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 2
VAN HAMME - AUBIN - SCHREDER

**WHEN AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN RELIC SURFACES IN GREECE,
BLAKE AND MORTIMER FACE ONE OF THEIR
TOUGHEST CHALLENGES EVER.**



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JEAN VAN HAMME

THE CURSE OF THE 30 PIECES OF SILVER

JUNE 2012

Part 1

PUBLISHED BY



RENE STERNE



CHANTAL DE SPIEGELEER



THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS

Part 1

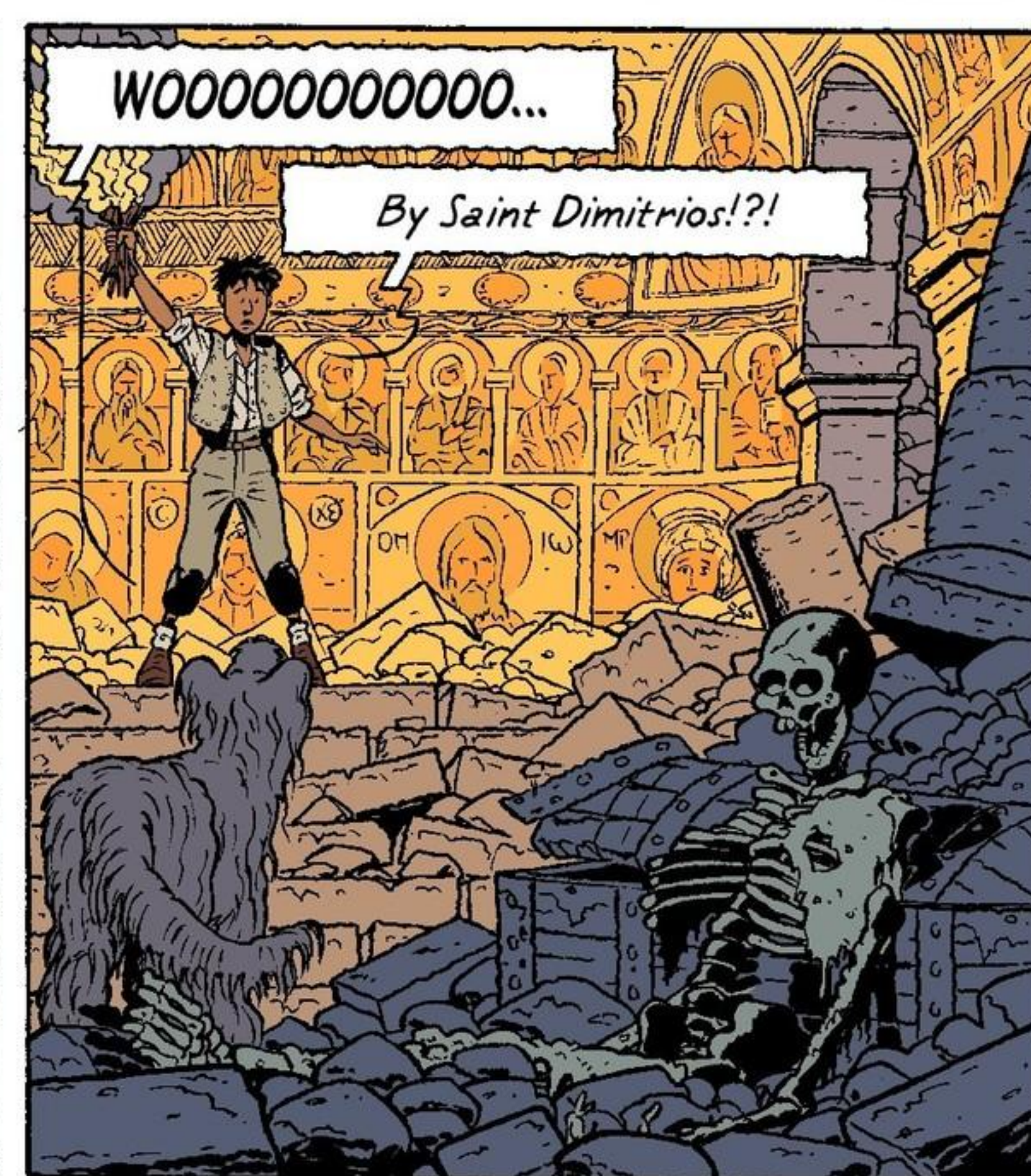
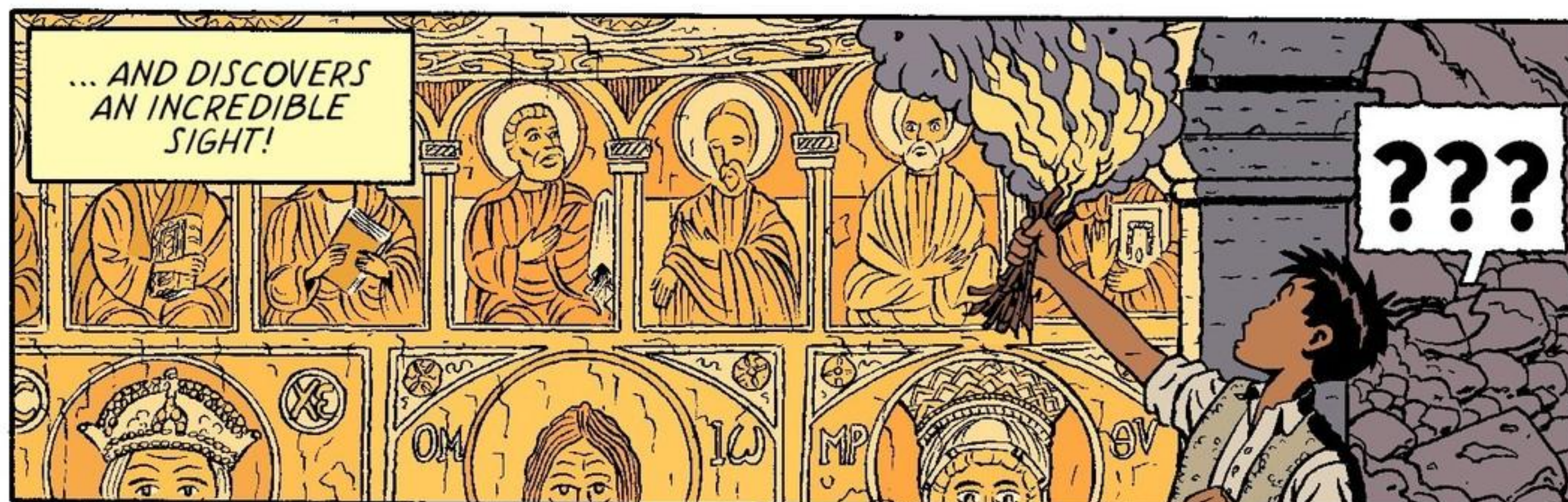
THE CURSE OF THE 30 PIECES OF SILVER

Jean Van Hamme

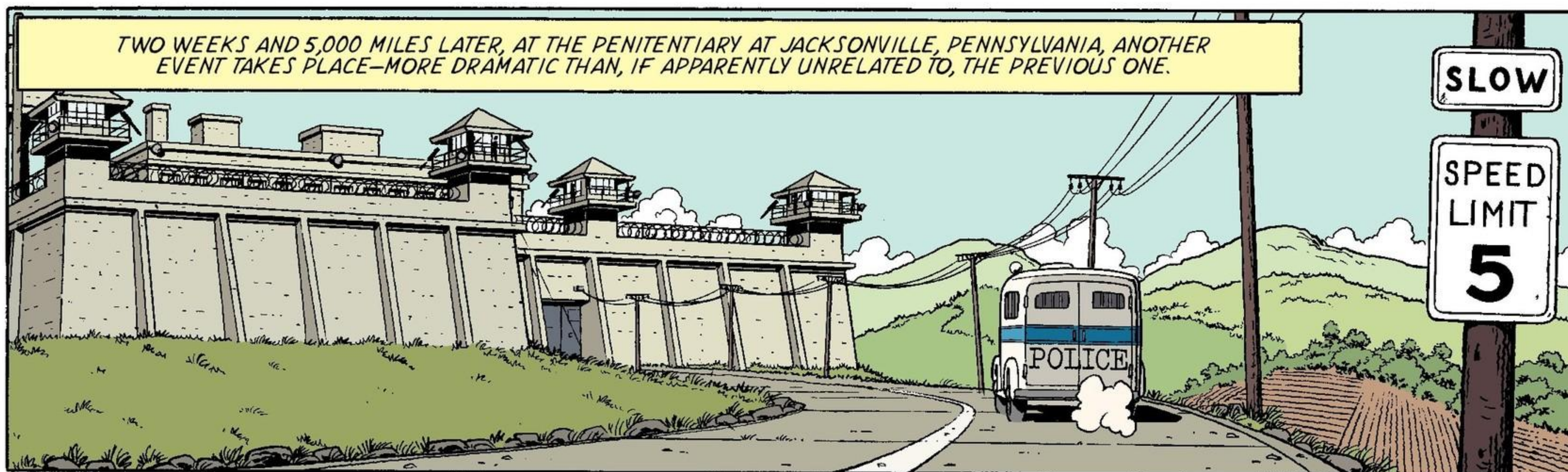
René Sterne

Chantal De Spiegeleer

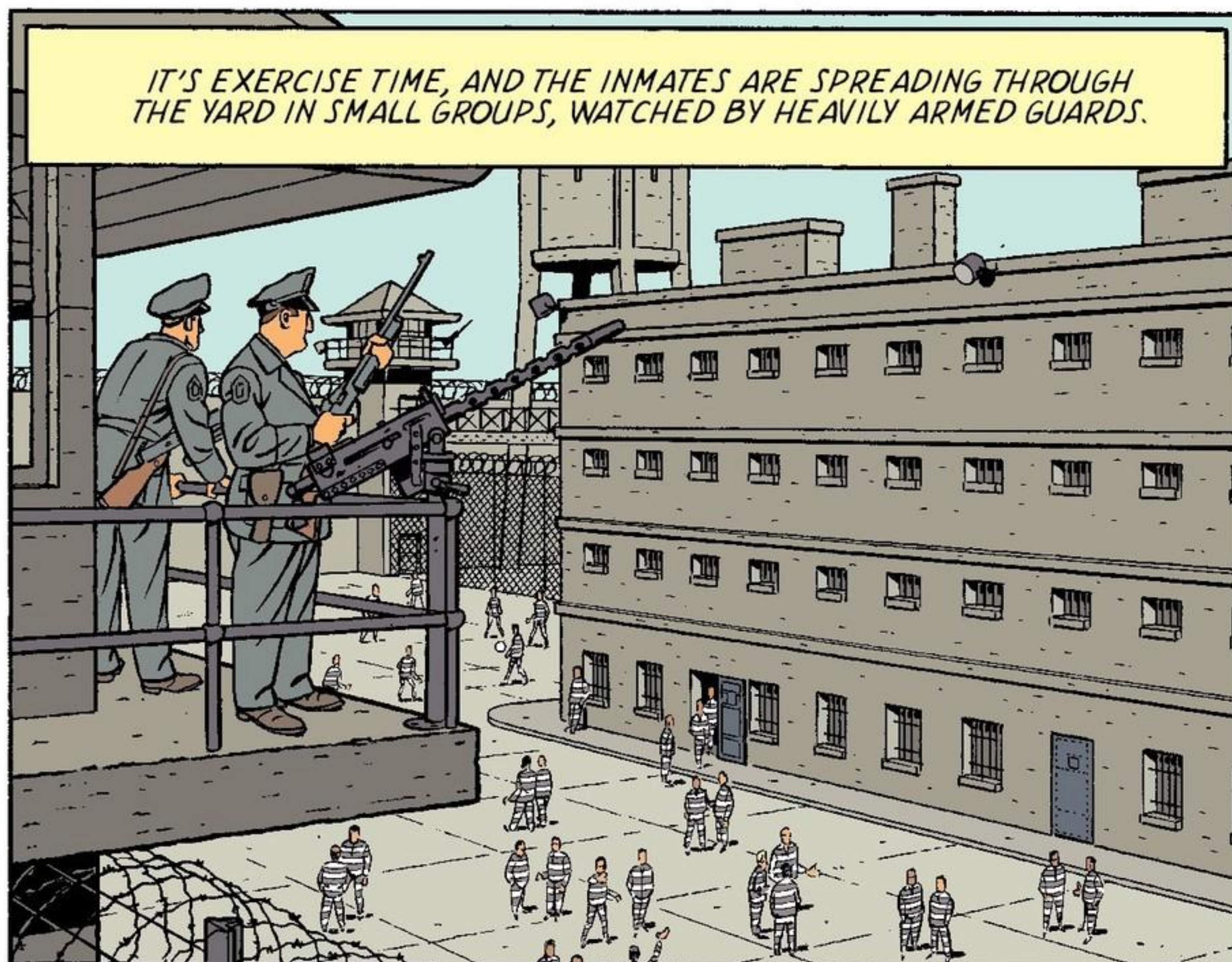




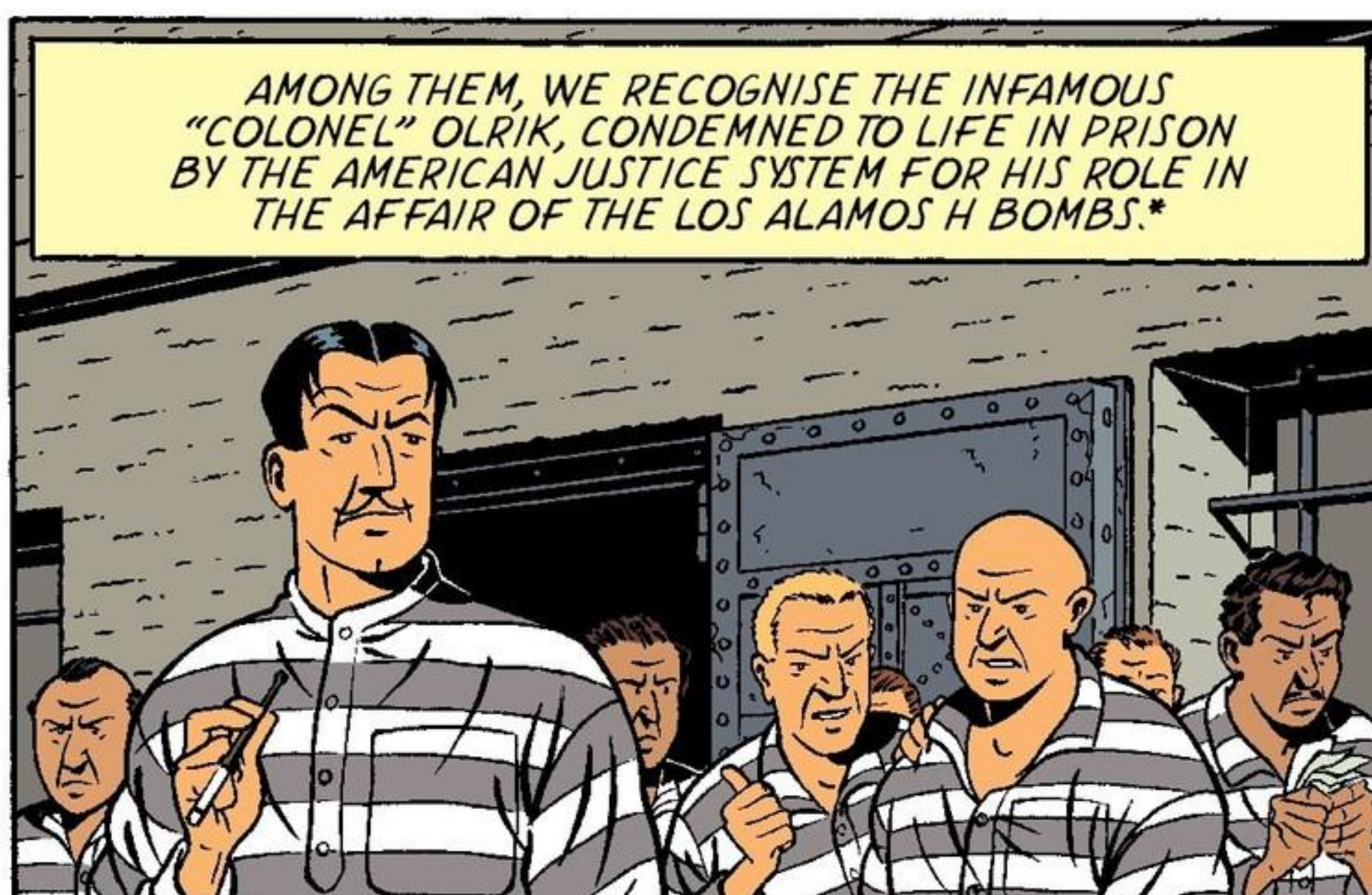
TWO WEEKS AND 5,000 MILES LATER, AT THE PENITENTIARY AT JACKSONVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA, ANOTHER EVENT TAKES PLACE—MORE DRAMATIC THAN, IF APPARENTLY UNRELATED TO, THE PREVIOUS ONE.



IT'S EXERCISE TIME, AND THE INMATES ARE SPREADING THROUGH THE YARD IN SMALL GROUPS, WATCHED BY HEAVILY ARMED GUARDS.



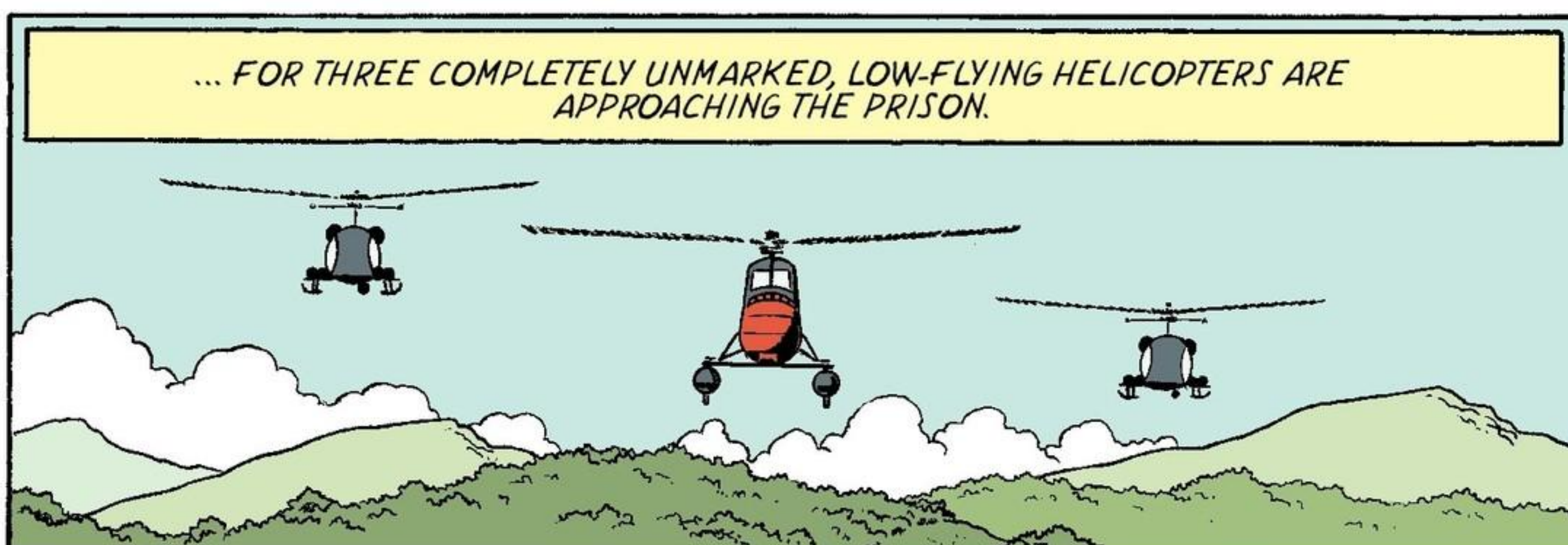
AMONG THEM, WE RECOGNISE THE INFAMOUS "COLONEL" OLRIK, CONDEMNED TO LIFE IN PRISON BY THE AMERICAN JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR HIS ROLE IN THE AFFAIR OF THE LOS ALAMOS H BOMBS.*



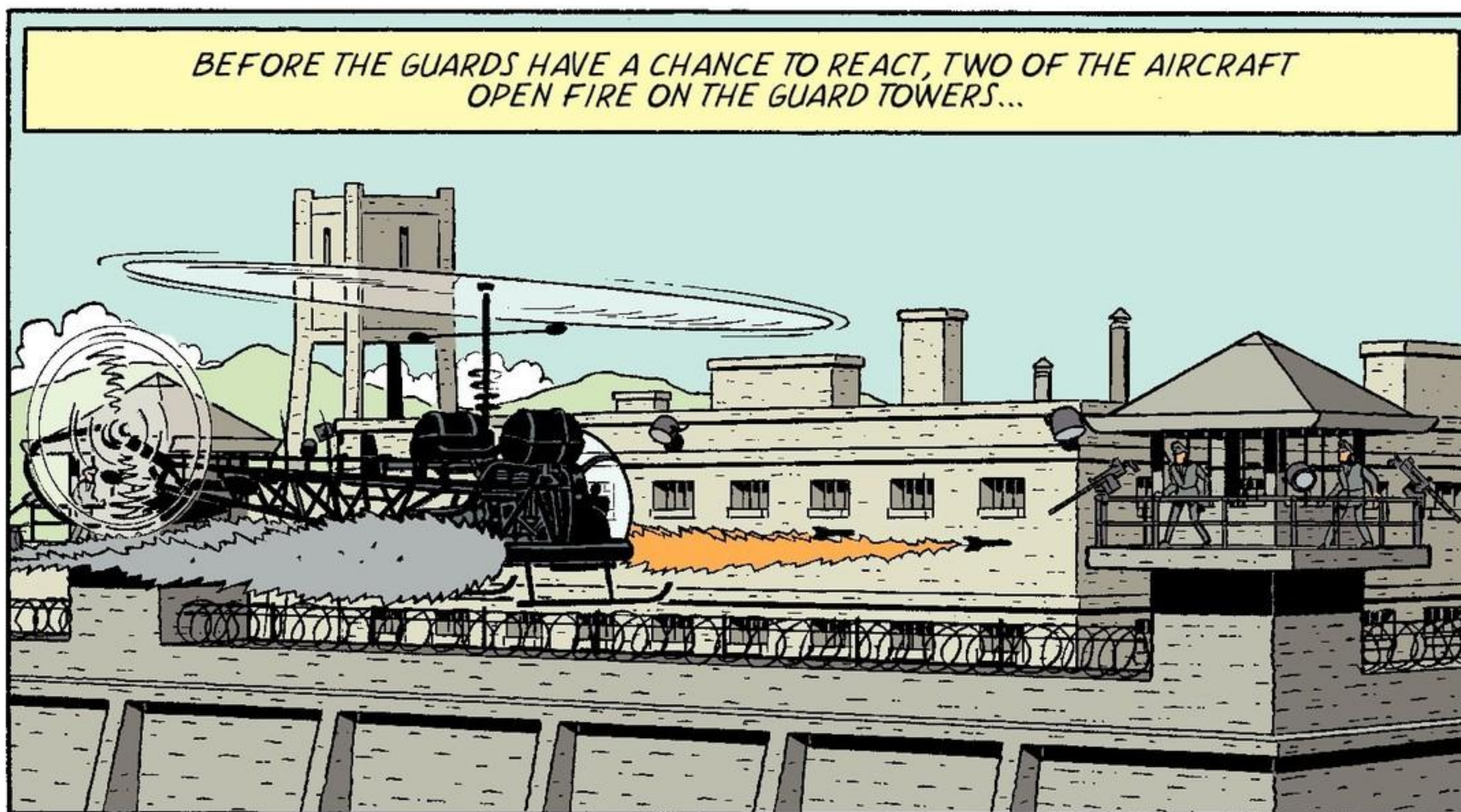
SUDDENLY, THE ALARM SOUNDS...



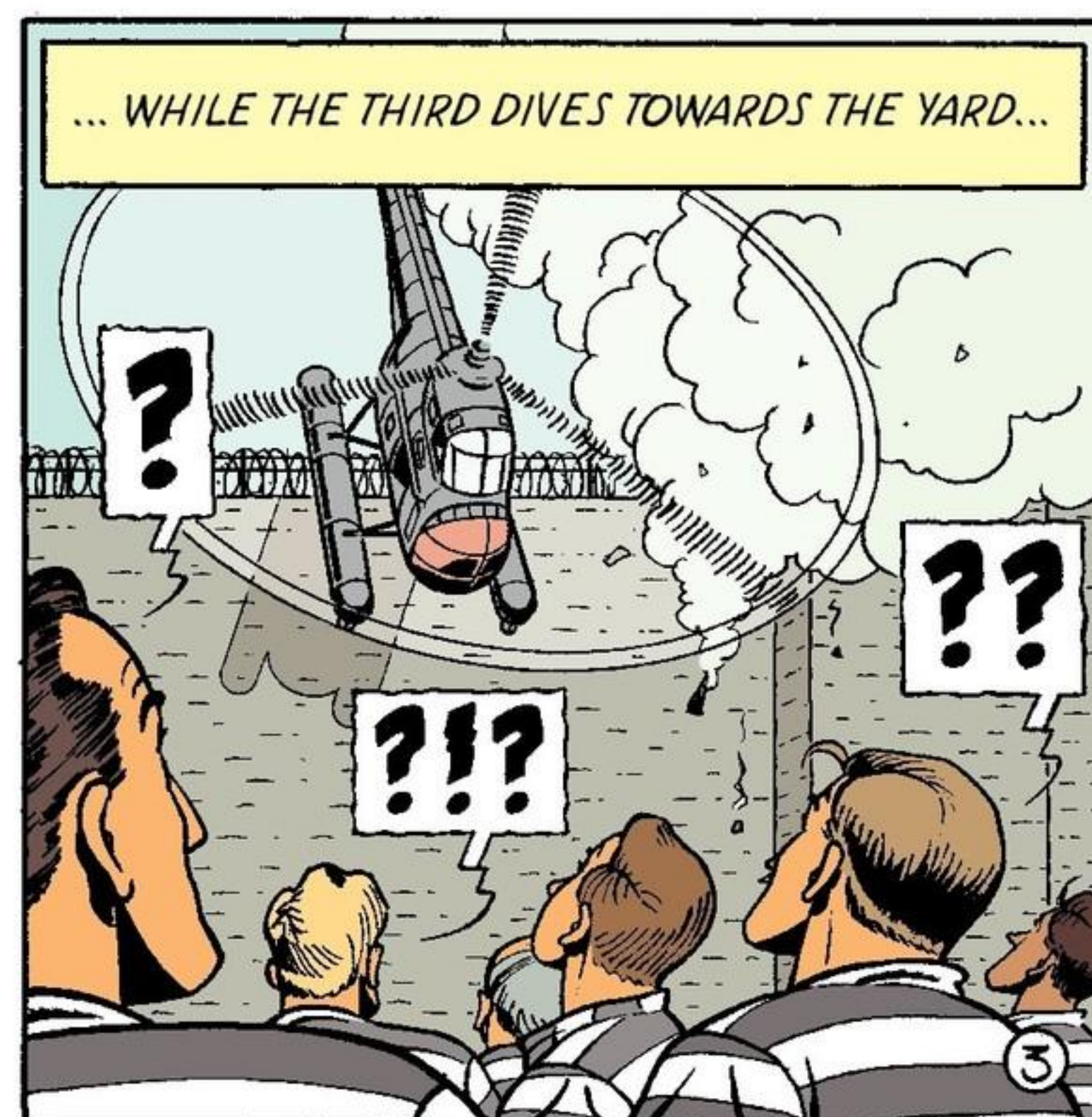
... FOR THREE COMPLETELY UNMARKED, LOW-FLYING HELICOPTERS ARE APPROACHING THE PRISON.



BEFORE THE GUARDS HAVE A CHANCE TO REACT, TWO OF THE AIRCRAFT OPEN FIRE ON THE GUARD TOWERS...



... WHILE THE THIRD DIVES TOWARDS THE YARD...



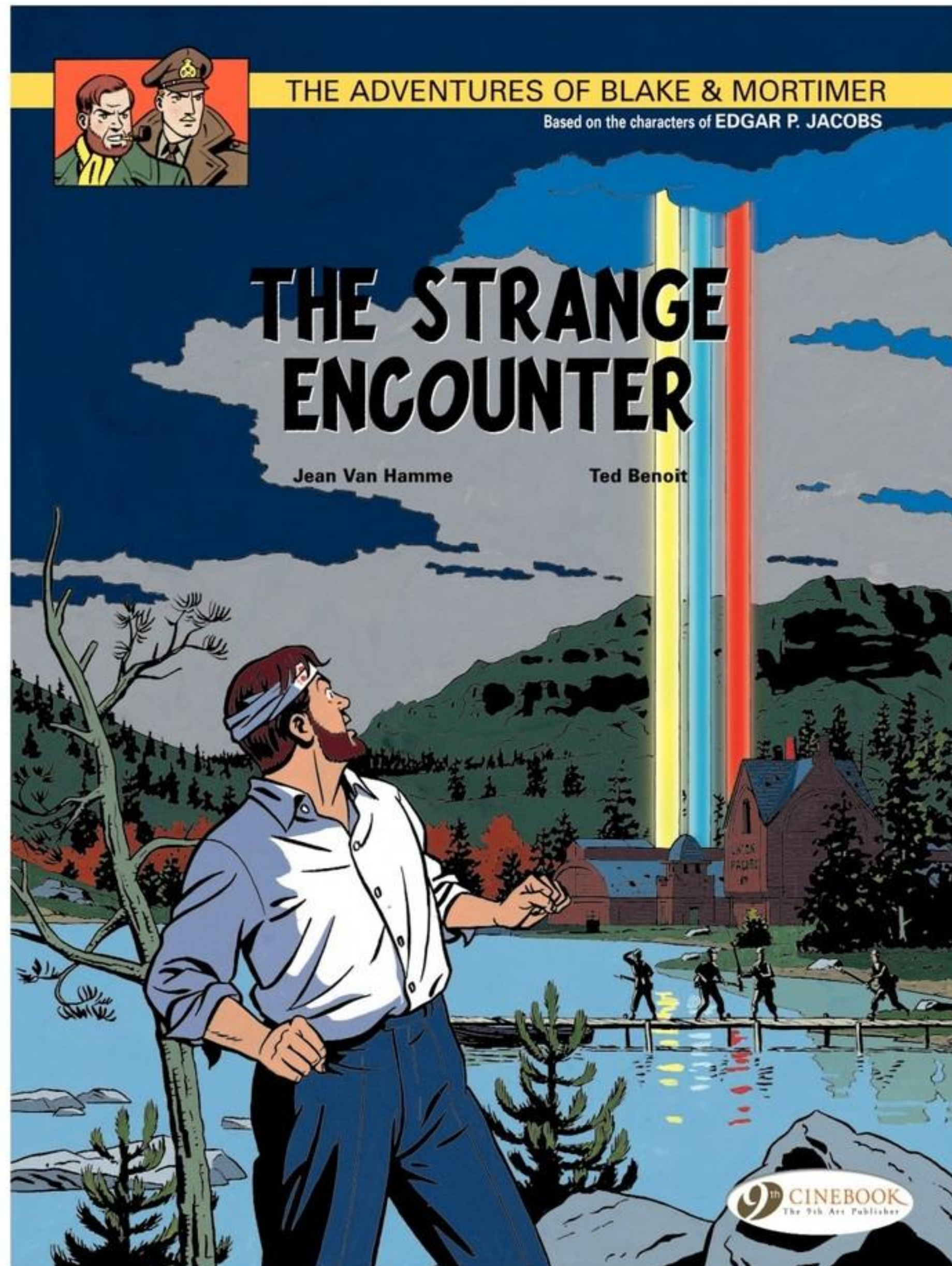
*SEE THE STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

THE STRANGE ENCOUNTER

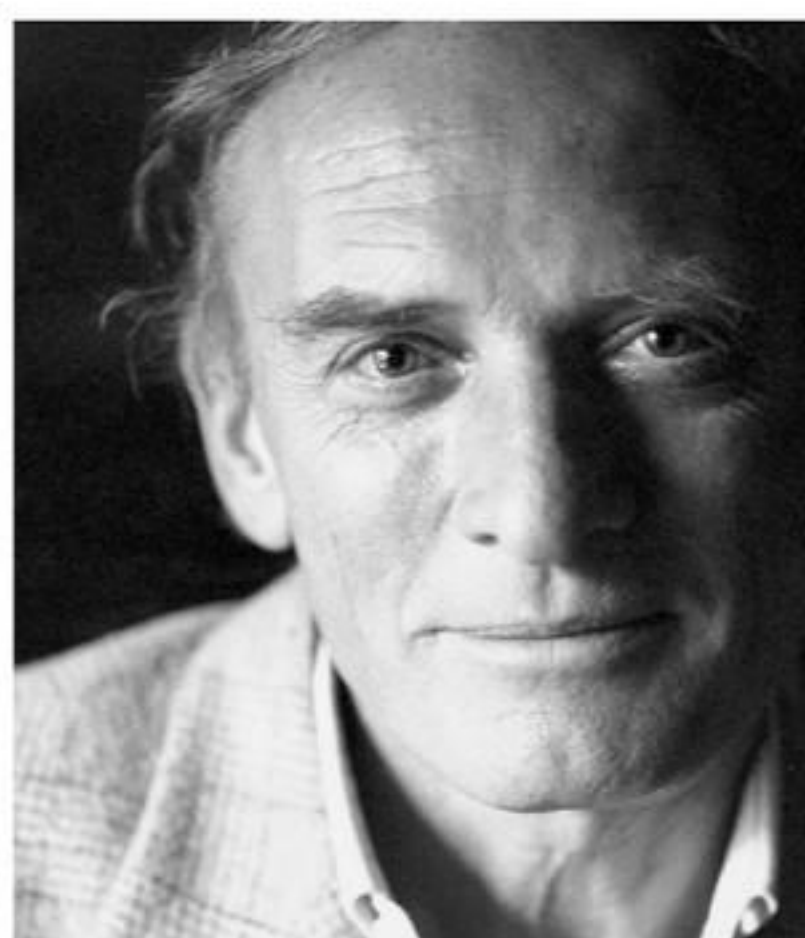
Jean Van Hamme

Ted Benoit

Based on the characters of **EDGAR P. JACOBS**

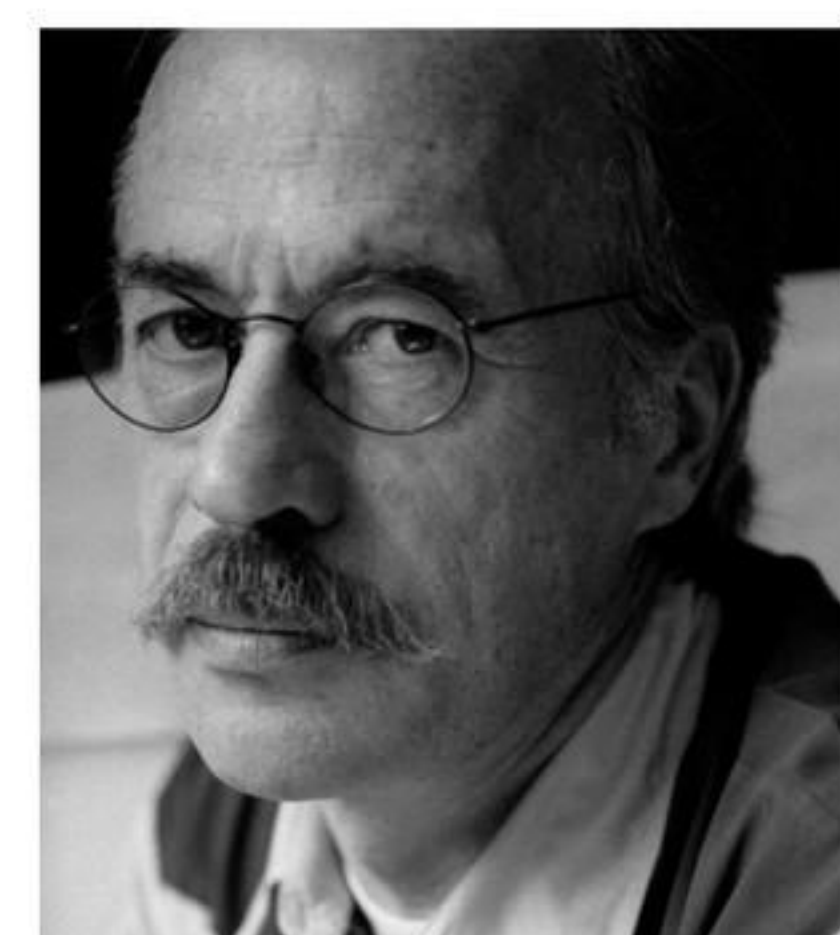


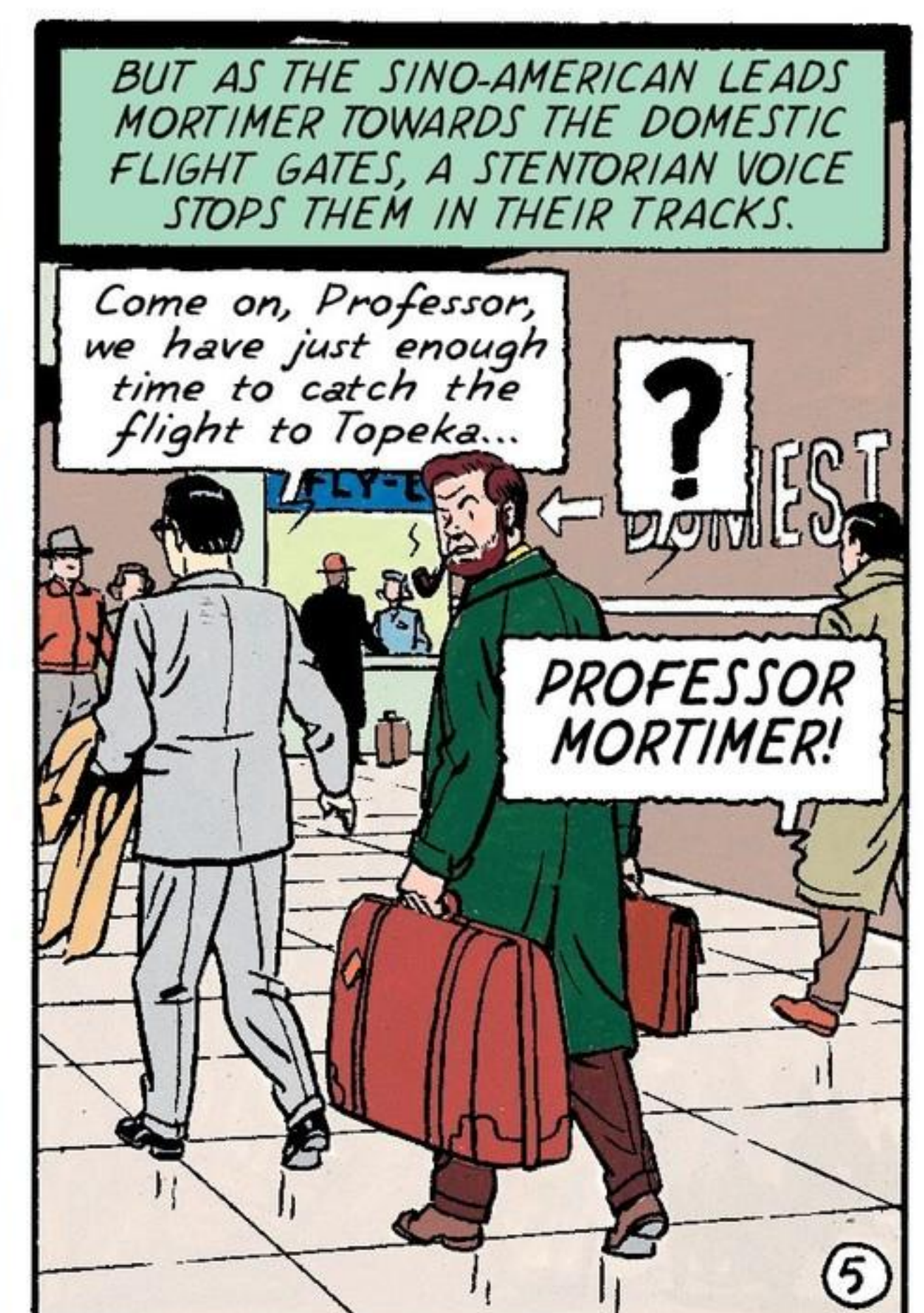
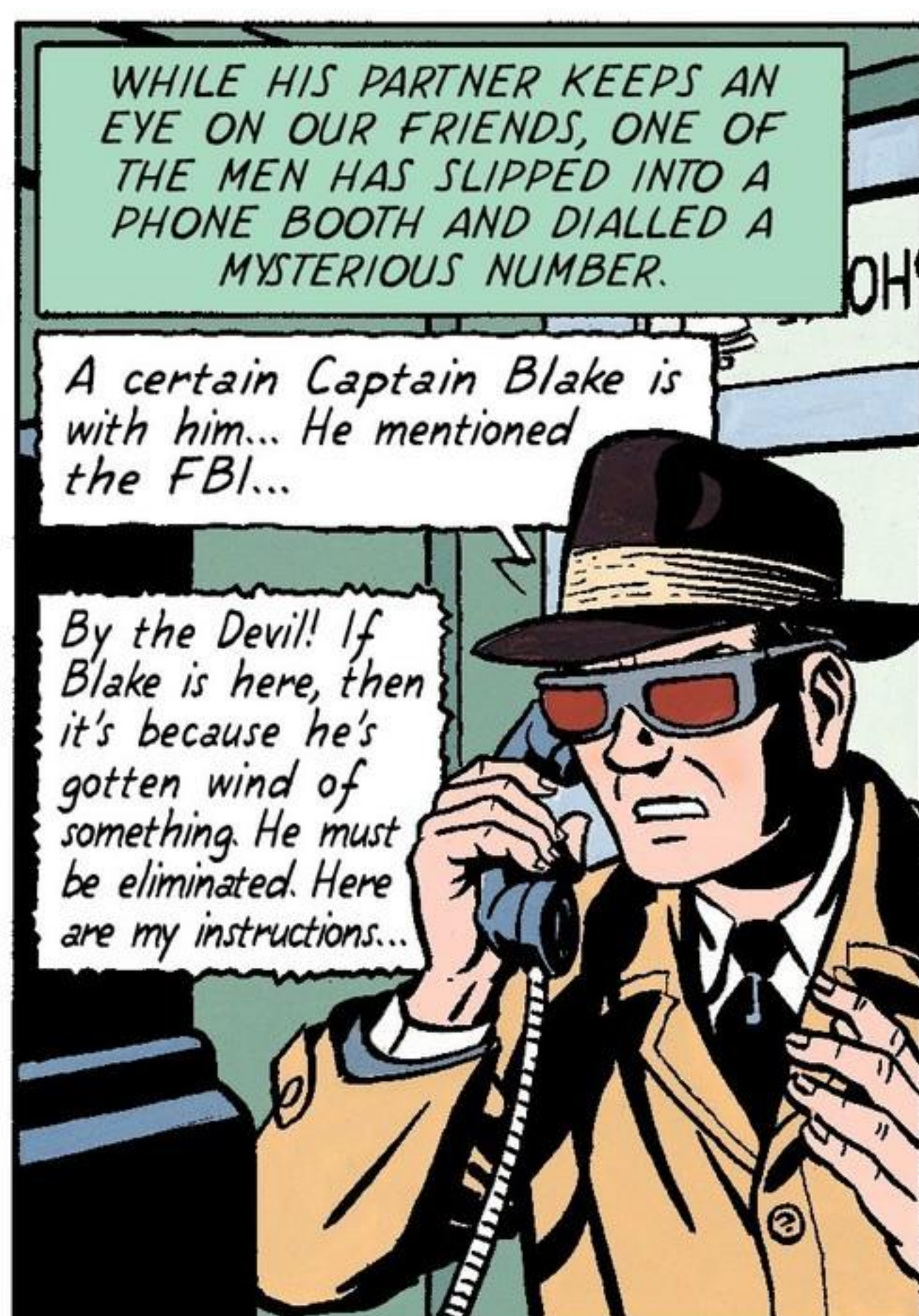
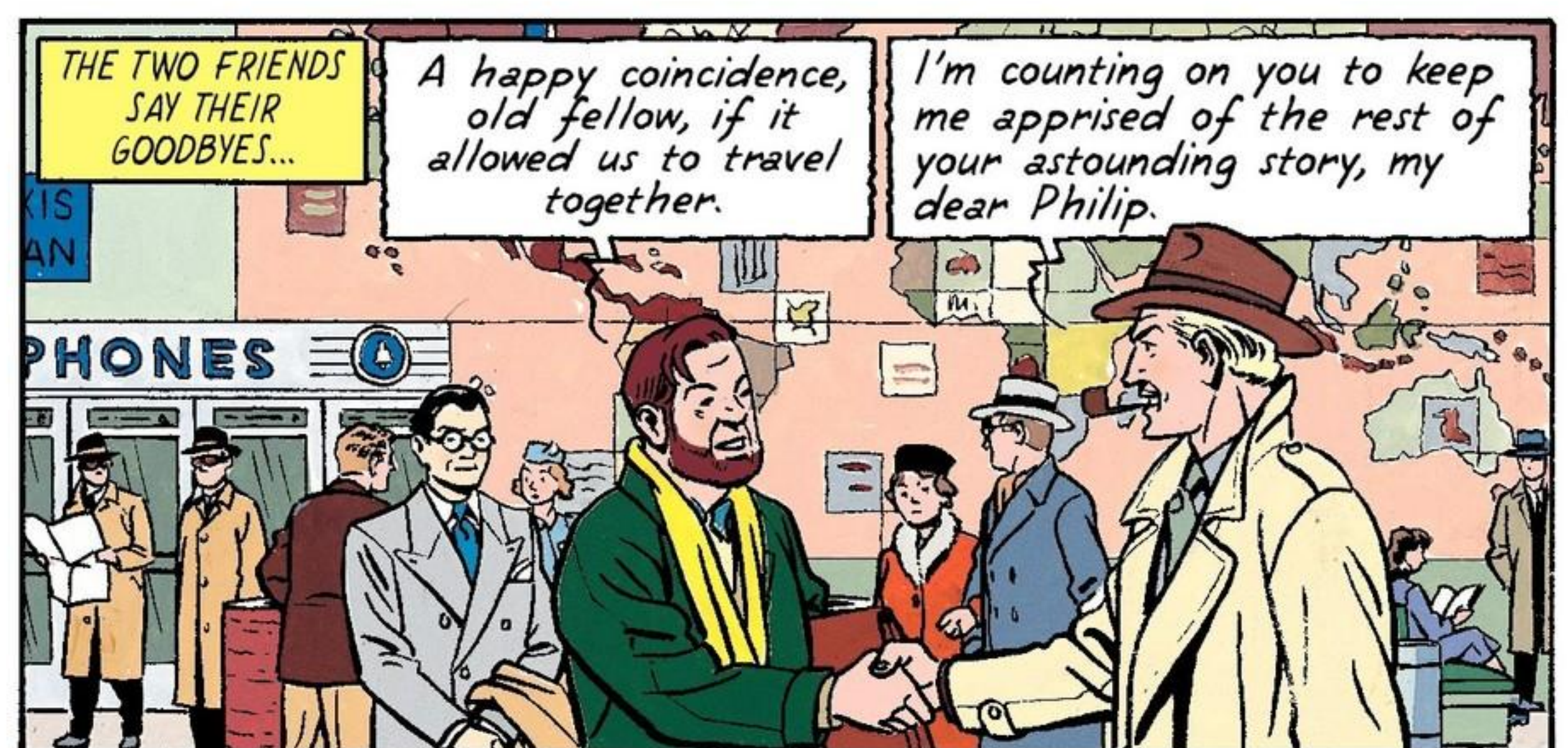
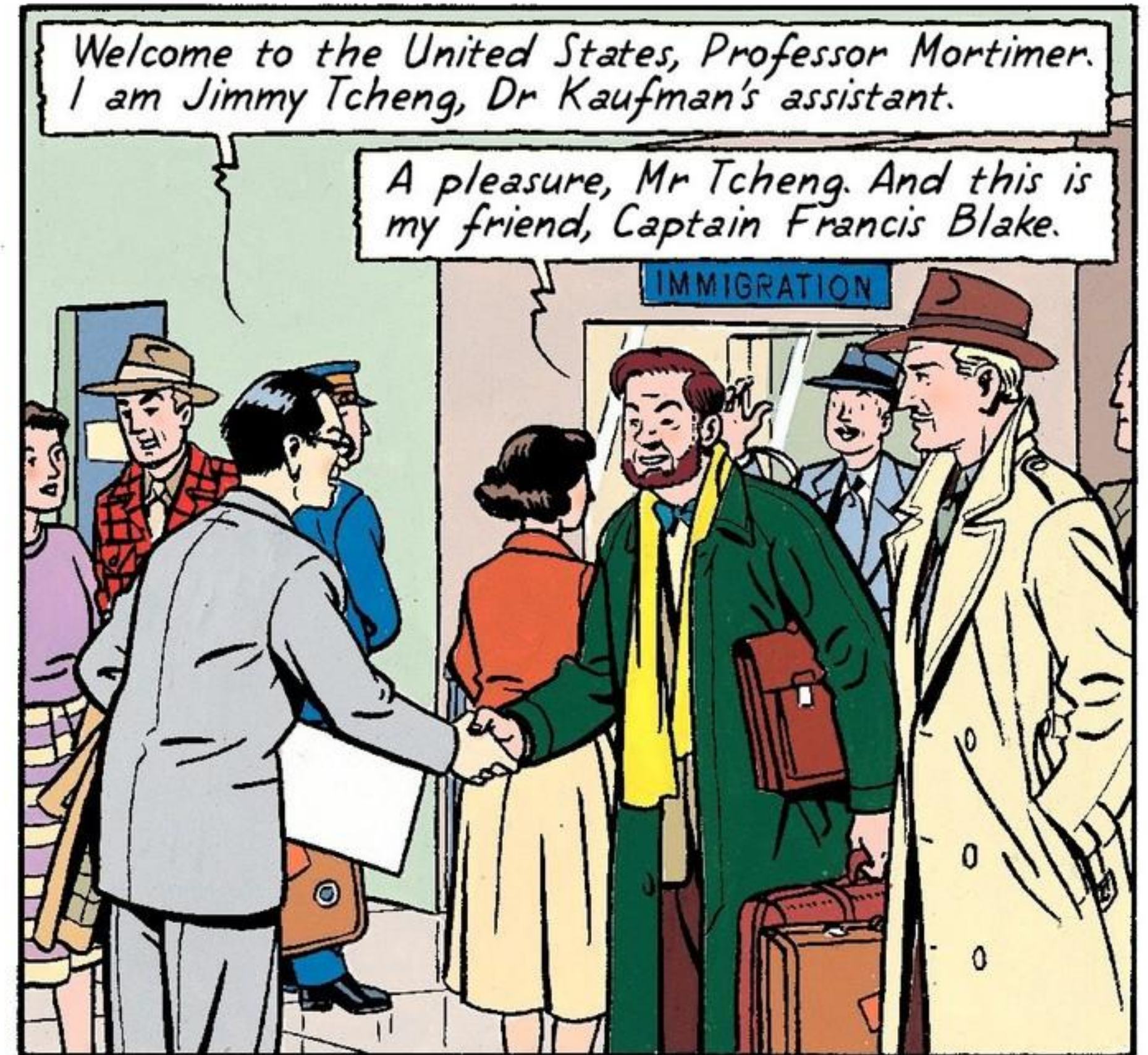
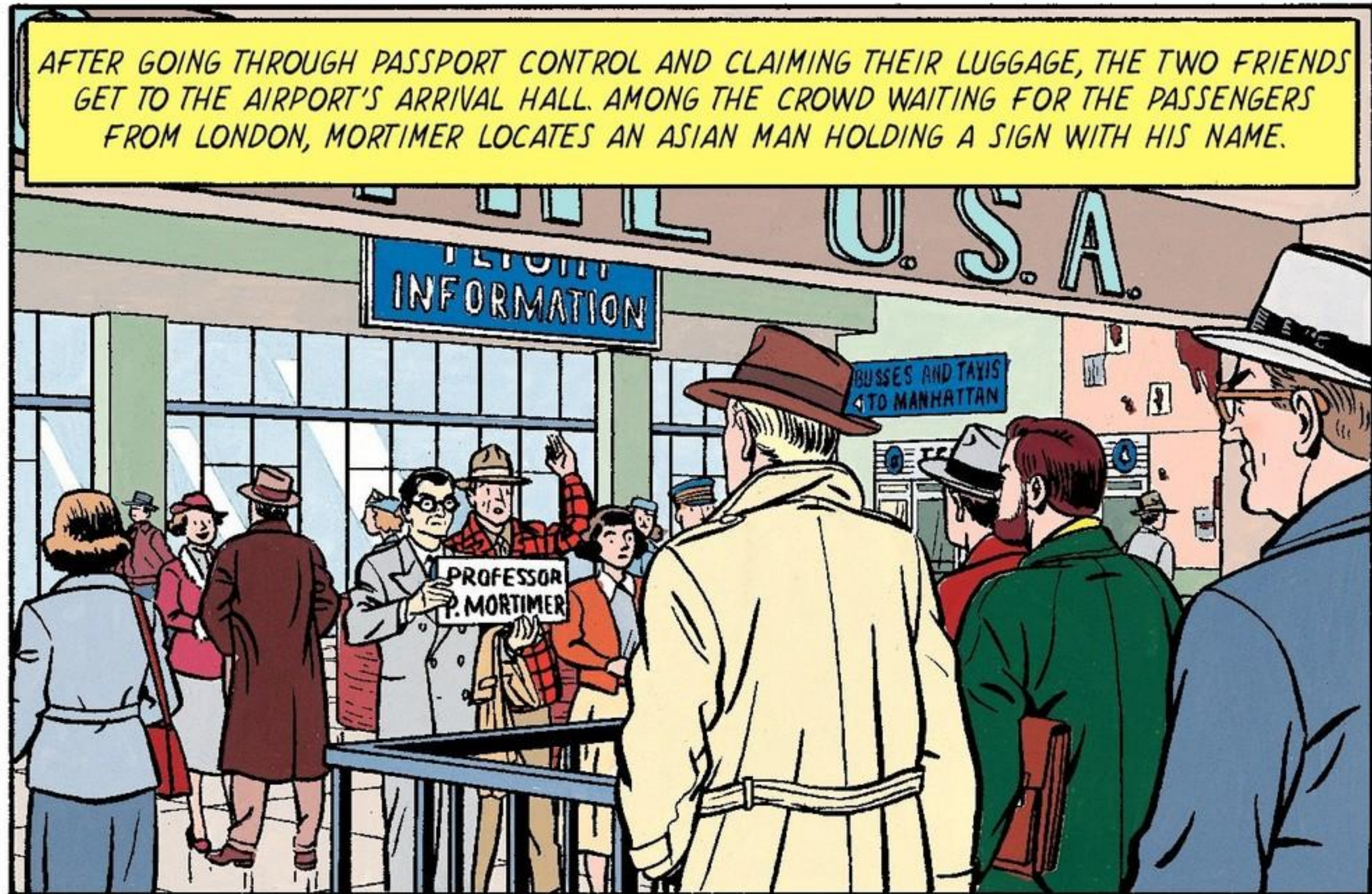
Blake and Mortimer head to the United States to investigate the mysterious circumstances surrounding the discovery of a 177-year-old body, which appears to have died very recently. The body is that of a Scottish major, Mortimer's forebear, who was leading a British military expedition to the US in 1777, where he was swallowed up by a strange multi-coloured light-beam shining down from the sky. Blake and Mortimer fight men in black armed with green-laser guns and soldiers emerging from the past in order to save the Earth from complete obliteration.



Jean **Van Hamme** is one of Belgium's most successful contemporary novelists and comics writers. His most popular successes are "Thorgal" (illustrated by **Rosinski**), "Largo Winch" (illustrated by **Francq**), "Lady S." (illustrated by **Aymond**), translated and published in English by Cinebook, and "XIII" (illustrated by **Vance**). In 2005, he was appointed "Officier des Arts et des Lettres" by the French Minister of Culture.

The artist Ted **Benoit** is a big admirer and supporter of the Clear Line graphic style instituted by **Hergé** and E. P. **Jacobs**. His work is described simply as a combination of extravagance, meticulousness and intelligence. For over 30 years, Ted **Benoit** has been creating work of surprisingly powerful simplicity, from the "Vers la Ligne Claire" collection in 1979 to the "Un Nouveau Monde" collection published in 2006.





Edgard Félix Pierre Jacobs (1904–1987), better known under his pen name Edgar P. Jacobs, was a comic book creator (writer and artist), born in Brussels, Belgium. It has been said of Jacobs that he didn't remember a time when he hadn't drawn.

Jacobs assisted fellow Belgian Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi) in the recasting of Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo*, *Tintin in America*, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* and *The Blue Lotus* for book publication. He also contributed directly to both the drawing and storylines for the Tintin double-albums *The Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Seven Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun*.

When the comics magazine *Tintin* was launched on 26th September 1946, it included Jacobs' story *Le secret de l'Espadon* (*The Secret of the Swordfish*). This story would be the first in the Blake and Mortimer series.

The characters of Captain Francis Blake, dashing head of MI5, his friend Professor Philip Mortimer, a nuclear physicist, and their sworn enemy Colonel Olrik became legendary heroes of the 9th art in the long-running series.

After Jacobs' death in 1987, Bob de Moor completed his unfinished last story. In the mid-1990s, the series was continued by the Jacobs Studios with two teams of writers and artists: Van Hamme/Benoit and Sente/Juillard.



ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION		
1	1950	Le Secret de l'Espadon, T1
2	1953	Le Secret de l'Espadon, T2
3	1953	Le Secret de l'Espadon, T3
4	1954	Le Mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T1
5	1955	Le Mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T2
6	1956	La Marque Jaune
7	1957	L'Énigme de l'Atlantide
8	1959	S.O.S. Météores
9	1962	Le Piège diabolique
10	1967	L'Affaire du Collier
11	1971	Les trois Formules du Professeur Satō, T1
12	1990	Les trois Formules du Professeur Satō, T2 (Jacobs/De Moor)
13	1996	L'Affaire Francis Blake (Van Hamme/Benoit)
14	2000	La Machination Voronov (Sente/Juillard)
15	2001	L'Étrange Rendez-Vous (Van Hamme/Benoit)
16	2003	Les Sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T1 (Sente/Juillard)
17	2004	Les Sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T2 (Sente/Juillard)
18	2008	Le sanctuaire du Gondwana (Sente/Juillard)
19	2009	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T1 (Van Hamme/Sterne/De Spiegeleer)
20	2010	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T2 (Van Hamme/Aubin)

CINEBOOK EDITION		
		The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 1
		The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 2
		The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 3
2	2007	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 1
3	2008	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 2
1	2007	The Yellow "M"
12	2012	Atlantis Mystery
6	2009	S.O.S. Meteors
		The Time Trap
7	2010	The Affair of the Necklace
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 1
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 2
4	2008	The Francis Blake Affair
8	2010	The Voronov Plot
5	2009	The Strange Encounter
9	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 1
10	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 2
11	2011	The Gondwana Shrine
13	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 1
14	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 2

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